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CAPTAIN OF THE ELEVEN

Books by
HAROLD M. SHERMAN

OVER THE LINE
STRIKE HIM OUT
THE TENNIS TERROR
DOWN THE ICE
UNDER THE BASKET
INTERFERENCE
IT'S A PASS
CAPTAIN OF THE ELEVEN
TAHARA—BOY KING OF THE DESERT
TAHARA—AMONG AFRICAN TRIBES
TAHARA—BOY MYSTIC OF INDIA
TAHARA—IN THE LAND OF YUCATAN

CAPTAIN OF THE ELEVEN

BY

HAROLD M. SHERMAN

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
CAPTAIN OF THE ELEVEN	
CHAPTER 1	13
CHAPTER 2	29
CHAPTER 3	43
CHAPTER 4	59
CHAPTER 5	70
CHAPTER 6	83
THE UMBRELLA FORMATION .	157
POLLY GETS A FOOTBALL .	197
NUMBER "23"	217

CAPTAIN OF THE ELEVEN

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CHAPTER I

Bo HARDY, quarterback of Garrett High's football team was peeved. He was more than peeved; he was sore. Here he was—a three letter man—about to play his last season for Old Garrett, and the fellows hadn't elected him team captain! It was an honor which Bo had felt was assured. He had been denied the captaincy last year, so he had been given to understand, simply because Bart Owen had been injured. Making Bart captain had pleased Garrett's great guard no end. Some had even claimed that the award had speeded Bart's recovery. All right—so much for that. But, now—how could the fellows explain their astounding selection of fullback Russ Willard?

"Tell me, Jim," a bitterly disappointed Bo demanded of his buddy, Left Half Morrison, "what happened to change the guys' minds? I thought my election was all set except for casting the ballots."

"It *was* all set," affirmed Jim, reluctantly.

"That is—it was all set until a couple weeks ago."

"Yeah?" persisted Bo. "What then?"

"Well," hesitated Jim, "then they sort of commenced to swing to Russ."

"Why? I've played for Garrett a year longer than Russ. I've been the outstanding man on the team!"

"That's just the trouble," replied Jim. "That is . . . I . . . er . . . mean . . . !"

"You'd better say what you mean!" fired Bo, irritably. "I've always thought a man was chosen captain because of his service to a team. If I'm wrong—correct me!"

"You're right," said Jim, greatly embarrassed, "and, then again—you're wrong. You see, Bo, the fellows don't exactly like to have a guy campaigning for the captaincy!"

Bo Hardy's face flushed. "Who campaigned? What you talking about?"

"Listen, old man!" Jim Morrison put a hand on his buddy's arm. "You're putting me in a tough spot. Someone's got to tell you this and I suppose I won't get any thanks for it. But the facts are—if you hadn't sounded out all the

fellows to see who they intended to vote for . . . !”

“Well, that’s natural, isn’t it?” snapped Bo. “No harm in letting them know I was ready to accept. Some birds wouldn’t want to be captain!”

A slow grin spread over Jim’s face. “The only birds who wouldn’t want to be captain,” he said, softly, “are the ones who know they haven’t any chance of being! Where you hurt yourself, Bo, was in being too anxious. If you’d only waited and let the fellows do it for you, instead of forcing it . . . ”

“I don’t get it at all!” retorted Bo, savagely. “My record was the thing for them to consider. If this is the way they appreciate what I’ve done for the team . . . !”

“Russ has done a lot, too!” reminded Jim. “He’s a darn fine fellow, too. Seldom has anything to say; just pounds away in there. You should have seen how surprised he was when they elected him.”

“He *should* have been surprised!” rejoined Bo, resentfully. “If I’d been him, I’d have dropped dead.”

"As it was, you almost dropped dead," declared Jim. "I feel sorry for you, Bo—but you asked for the low-down and I've handed it to you."

Garrett's veteran quarterback nodded, grimly. He was talking between his teeth and looking reflectively off into the distance.

"The guys are going to regret this. I'm going to hang up such a record this season that they'll feel cheap for not having honored me. Russ had another year to go. They could have elected him captain next season. But they knew this was the last year to favor me. Of all the dirty, rotten deals . . . !"

"Don't say that!" begged Jim. "No use getting sour over it, Bo. You might as well swallow this like a man. Don't let the fellows see that it makes any difference. I wouldn't give them that much satisfaction!"

"You wouldn't?" ranted Bo. "I've a notion to tell them all what I think of 'em! As for Russ—if he'd been a real sport—he'd have refused to accept the captaincy. I would have—if I'd been in his shoes. I'd have said to the gang: 'No, fellows—I don't deserve this nearly

as much as Bo Hardy. I think you're making a mistake in not making *him* captain!" "

"That's funny!" said Jim, chuckling.

"What's funny?"

"Why, that's exactly what Russ *did* say!"

Jim replied, as Bo stared, unbelievingly. "But the fellows wouldn't listen to him. They *made* him accept!"

"Well, I'll be jiggered!" breathed Garrett's quarterback, "This just about whips me!"

As Garret High swung into its new football season, the eleven's performance was such as to make Coach Stewart hopeful that his team might score victories in its two big games—the clash with Parnell and the last contest on the schedule against Ludlow.

"We've very close to the best team in our history," the coach admitted to sports writers. "And barring unforeseen accidents or bad breaks, we should make it hot for all our opponents. Of course, Parnell and Ludlow, because they are much larger schools, always put strong elevens on the field. My boys, however, have their hearts set on going through the season undefeated."

Home newspapers, following Garret's play, had particularly good things to say of the manner in which the team was handled by quarterback Bo Hardy.

"Without such a veteran as Bo calling signals," one sports item had it, "Garrett's prospects for a successful season on the gridiron might be considerably dimmer. The way Bo has started his final year as a member of the eleven, points to his ending his football days in a blaze of glory. Captain Russ Willard is playing his usual good game at fullback but it is Bo who is the real spark plug of the eleven!"

A highly satisfied Bo Hardy clipped this write-up from the paper, sticking it up on the looking glass in his dresser. He stopped to read it as he fixed his tie or brushed his hair. The item was a tonic to him, indicating as it did that his work quite overshadowed that of the fellow who had been elected captain.

"I'll show that guy Russ up so badly that everyone will be wondering why he was picked," Bo told himself.

In every game, Bo dedicated himself to this resolve anew. He played with a relentless

drive—the likes of which he had never exhibited before. His old evidence of comradeship for team-mates was gone. They had betrayed him in shifting to Russ. Very well—it was up to Russ to justify his choice and he, Bo Hardy, was going to make it just as tough going for the captain as possible.

“He’ll have to be better than good to keep pace with me!” Bo raged, inwardly.

It was impossible to disguise his feelings. Team members talked of the way Bo was “taking it” behind his back.

“Serves Bo right,” was the opinion of right tackle Trot Kimball. “He was getting the swelled head. If we’d voted him captain he’d have been unbearable. As it is—look at the game that boy’s playing!”

“Yeah,” laughed right end Ping Eller. “And look how he’s riding us! Bo’s got no mercy. He’s bound to get even for what we did to him by making us play the game of our lives! Say—it’s almost a crime the way we’ve walloped some of these weaker teams!”

“But the worse we beat ‘em, the better it makes Bo look,” pointed out right half Walt

Larsen. "Remember how the papers used to rave about Frank Carideo of Notre Dame, giving him credit for over half the team's success because of the way he ran it? Well—we don't dare admit it—but Bo's the Carideo of our outfit. Thing to do is keep him trying to prove how good he is—and he'll probably be great all season!"

"That may be a good idea," counselled Jim Morrison, "providing we don't carry it too far. Russ and Bo are practically at swords points now. Bo doesn't miss an opportunity to land on Russ. I've spoken to him several times. We don't want any blow-up!"

"You're right about that," agreed Trot Kimball, soberly, as fellow players nodded. "We'll have to keep our eyes on those two!"

A week before the first big game against Parnell, Garrett High was scheduled to meet Staunton. Though not expected to cause any trouble, Staunton rudely surprised by flashing a dazzling aerial attack which shook receivers loose for two touchdown runs in the very first quarter. With this much damage done, Garrett hastily and desperately rebuilt her defense

against Staunton's passes and stopped the attack dead. Staunton, however, elated at her success against the strongly rated Garrett eleven, now abandoned all thoughts of further scoring and set herself to the grim task of holding a twelve point lead and creating one of the season's major upsets. The Staunton rooters went wild as the half ended with their eleven out in front, twelve to nothing.

"To good to be true!" exclaimed a Staunton fan.

"It won't be true much longer!" defied a disgruntled Garrett supporter. "You were pretty lucky to get away with those long passes. You caught our boys off their stride but they'll run over you like an army tank this next half!"

"Well, we've thrown a scare into you anyway!" the Staunton fan retorted. "And you're going to find that our line isn't going to be so soft to get through!"

In the locker room a sobered Garrett squad heard Coach Stewart brand them for over-confidence.

"Good thing for you fellows that this is the Staunton instead of the Parnell game," said the

coach. "Give Parnell a lead like this and you'd have an almighty time ever getting it back. It doesn't pay to take any eleven too lightly. You never can tell when an otherwise mediocre team is going to have an extra good day—and when it does, it's often equal to the best. Staunton will probably be playing over her head the entire game so don't let up against her an instant!"

"I warned the gang to cover up more on those long passes!" broke in quarterback Bo Hardy. "But they didn't think Staunton could complete 'em!"

"We sure didn't," admitted right end Ping Eller, "and from the way Staunton acted, they evidently didn't think they could complete 'em, either. Boy—what horseshoes!"

"No horseshoes," denied Coach Stewart. "Just good, smart football. They shot the works against us at the start, figuring we were a heavy favorite to win—and they've gotten away with it so far. You fellows, if you're the team I think you are, should go out there this next half and take Staunton by a couple of touchdowns!"

"Absolutely!" seconded Bo, with a challeng-

ing glance at the silent Captain Russ Willard. "Well, Russ, why don't *you* say something?"

"Because," answered Russ, quietly, "I think it's more important to *do* something!"

The reply caught Bo momentarily off guard. He glanced about and was relieved to see that Coach Stewart, having concluded his remarks, had left the room.

"It's about *time* you were doing something!" Bo flung back. "I'd like to see some real ground-gaining this half. Since you've become captain you seem to think your title's going to bowl 'em over. But for your information, old man, you've still got to play football!"

Team members gasped their amazement. Bo Hardy was becoming more and more audacious. Captain Russ Willard, up to now, had been long suffering. He had accepted many cutting remarks without rejoinder; had even laughed off many of Bo's biting sallies. But he could hardly be expected to let this last crack go unchallenged.

"Come over here, Bo," Captain Russ invited, motioning to a secluded corner of the locker room.

"Suppose you come over here?" was Bo's retort, as he stretched out on a bench for a few minutes' rest before the referee's whistle should call the squad out to start the second half.

"Okay!" replied Russ, after a moment when the air seemed charged with electric needles.

Garrett's captain indicated plainly that whatever he had to say was to be said to Bo in private, so team members obligingly moved to the other side of the room, staring curiously.

"Listen, old man," said Russ, as he dropped down on a bench nearby, with Bo eyeing him, crabbedly. "I think it's about time we were coming to some sort of an understanding for the good of the team. You're acting like a two-year-old over this captain business. What's it amount to?"

Bo, glowering at Russ sullenly, made no reply.

"You can't answer that one," charged Russ, keeping his voice low, "Because you know in your heart that you're making a big fuss over nothing."

"I've got plenty to make a fuss about!" Bo blurted out. "It's easy for you to say it doesn't mean anything to be captain when you're *it*!"

"I'd gladly change places with you if I could," was Russ's quick answer. "Everybody expects more of a captain . . . and I'm really no different than the rest of you fellows. I'm out there, doing the best I can . . . and when you're not giving me a fair break . . .!"

"What do you mean?" flared Bo.

"Maybe it's my imagination," said Russ, quietly, though with deadly directness. "But it seems to me you're not calling my signals any too often. I'm the most consistent ground gainer on the team . . . and yet you're passing me up when my ball carrying would do the most good. Either Jim or Walt are getting the call."

"That's not so!" denied Bo, hotly.

"No?" replied Russ in the same devastatingly quiet tone. "And I suppose I'm all wrong when I make the remark that you've been carrying the ball too much yourself?"

"Well—I . . . er . . . I make good gains, don't I?"

"Sometimes," smiled Russ. "But you're hurting your efficiency as quarterback. You used to keep yourself more in the background. What are you trying to do—hog as much of the

limelight as you can to make up for your not being chosen captain?"

Bo's face instantly colored. He leaped to his feet, fingers twitching. Team members moved forward.

"Watch yourself, Bo!" called Jim.

"I ought to punch this baby right in the jaw!" exploded Garrett's quarterback.

"I'd advise you not to try it," said Captain Russ Willard, unruffled. "And I'd also advise you to forget about yourself and think more of the team. We've got a little problem on our hands to dispose of . . . and unless we pull together, our dream of an undefeated season is going up in smoke! Let's go, gang, and take our fight out on Staunton!"

The referee's whistle was sounding and the squad started moving toward the locker room exit. Jim, taking an irate Bo Hardy by the arm, forcibly turned him toward the door.

"You gone crazy?" he whispered in his buddy's ear. "What you want to do—get the fellows all down on you?"

"They've been down for some time," rejoined Bo.

"You're exaggerating things," countered Jim. "You had them all raving about the way you were playing until you jumped on Russ. This isn't getting you anywhere."

"It *isn't*? Should I kowtow to a guy just because he's captain? If he's putting up a poor game, I'm going to tell him about it. That's my business as quarterback."

"Bo," said Jim, as they trotted out on the field. "You weren't elected but you're trying, *unofficially*, to be captain. Either Russ or the coach is the one to speak to us if there's anything to say. You should go to one of them instead of landing on us. And it's certainly bad form for you to razz our captain!"

"Too bad about him!" shot back Bo. "You should have heard what he said to me. He's a wise guy—talking to me in private. If you fellows had gotten a load of what he handed me, you'd have realized the kind of a bird you elected captain. Accused me of grandstanding . . . blamed me for making him look bad . . . insinuated I was jealous . . .!"

"Aw, dry up!" fired Jim, his own patience exhausted. "You're all wet, Bo—and if you'd

like to know something—I voted against your being captain myself!"

Garrett's quarterback winced at the revelation. Then his jaw tightened.

"Okay," he accepted, bitterly. "I don't need *you*, either!"

But Jim, watching out of the corner of his eye, murmured under his breath: "That *hurt*, but I had to do it. I can't see a swell fellow like Bo going wrong! He's got to get a hold on himself!"

CHAPTER II

STAUNTON High's rooters cheered mightily as their team lined up to kick-off to Garrett. The invaders were besought to hold their twelve point lead at all costs and carry Garrett's *bacon* back to Staunton. A victory would be the occasion for the greatest celebration in Staunton's history. Some wildly anticipating fans were even threatening to burn down the old city hall if Staunton should win—since the hall was adjudged fit only for bonfire purposes.

"Hold 'em, Staunton!" resounded the cry.

And new roars went up as Staunton, kicking off, rushed down the field to nail Russ Willard, Garrett captain, before he had made ten yards.

"Come on, Garrett—let's go!" appealed the home supporters.

Quarterback Bo Hardy, kneeling behind Staunton's determined line, barked his signals. The ball was on the eighteen yard mark. Bo passed to right half Walt Larsen who was stopped cold as he tried to round the end. It

looked from the stands as though a wave of green jerseys had engulfed him.

"Signals!" shouted Bo. And the pigskin went to Captain Russ who drove off left tackle for three bitterly contested yards.

"Snap out of it, you guys!" bellowed Bo, who was raging inside. "Let's see something!"

Left half Jim Morrison was slipped the ball next. He was good for only two yards.

"Punt formation!" shrieked Bo, and Captain Russ Willard went back to the ten yard line, holding out his hands.

"We forced 'em to kick!" howled a Staunton supporter, joyously. "Boy, what a team we've got! Either that or Garrett's been overrated!"

Russ got the ball away in a beautiful spiral punt which carried to Staunton's forty yard line where the receiver was tackled in his tracks.

"They can't keep this kind of playing up!" declared right end Ping Eller. "Right after 'em, gang!"

But Staunton, frenziedly trying for a startling triumph, contested every foot of the ground toward her own goal. And it was not until the last minute of the third quarter that Garrett was

able to make serious inroads into Staunton territory. But, at last, a bewildering lateral pass behind the line had shaken Bo Hardy loose for a thirty-seven yard run, carrying the ball down to Staunton's six yard mark.

"Now we're started!" cried Captain Russ Willard. "Good work, Bo!"

"You said I never called on you at the right time," snapped Bo, feelingly. "All right—here's the ball. Let's see you take it over!"

The play called for a plunge into the line. Russ, a protest on his lips, was forced to go into action. The Staunton line rose up and fell upon him as he drove against it.

"Not so hot, are you?" Bo hurled at Russ as the team captain crawled to his feet. "But we're going to try you again . . . ! Signals!"

"Signals over!" demanded Russ. "What you doing, Bo? . . . That Staunton line's been a tartar all day. We can't hope to gain through it! Try a . . . !"

"Signals!" shouted Bo, and persisted in calling Russ's number for a drive at the other side of the line.

Russ, in desperation, pounded through for

two yards. Ball on Staunton's four yard line and third down.

"You still think you're good?" Bo was saying as Russ staggered back into position. "Giving the captain all the breaks now. That's what you wanted, isn't it?"

Russ grabbed Bo roughly by the shoulder. "See here! You cut out this personal stuff and call signals right. Give us a scoring play! You know what it takes to put that ball across. No sense in attacking Staunton's strongest point!"

"Oh, so you don't want to carry the ball after all?" razzed Bo. "Well, why didn't you say so?"

Whereupon, Garrett's quarterback proceeded to call his own number with the ball going back to Russ, ostensibly for yet another line smash. Instead, Russ lateral passed to Bo who had dashed out to the side, and Bo, catching the ball at his finger tips, threw himself across the goal line.

"Yea, Bo!" shrieked the Garrett stands.

Staunton looked disconsolate. The third quarter was up with the play and Garrett had six points. She might very easily have one more

point the moment the teams had changed ends of the field and Garrett was given the chance to add said point after touchdown. But, even so, another touchdown would have to be made before Garrett could take the lead . . . and Garrett would score again. The whole Staunton team fervently sealed this resolution by clasping hands. They would be carried from the field of battle on stretchers before they would permit their goal line to be crossed once more.

"You should have called that play on the first down," Captain Russ Willard told Quarterback Bo Hardy as the teams lined up in the new sector, ready for the fourth and last quarter.

"Not me," mocked Bo. "If I had—I've been accused of carrying the ball too much!"

Bo was obviously trying to make Russ eat his words. Garrett's captain made no retort. Instead he leveled off a place on the ground and held out his hands for the ball. The two lines came together. Garrett's line held while Russ dropkicked the pigskin over the uprights for the extra point. Score: Staunton, 12; Garrett, 7.

"It won't be long now!" predicted a Garrett enthusiast.

But it was longer than any Garrett supporter imagined before their harassed eleven was able to get going again. Staunton, taking the kick-off, put on an offensive of her own which was not stopped until the enemy reached Garrett's twenty-six yard mark. This advance ate up valuable minutes and added new joy to the Staunton beholders. With five minutes remaining, it was Garrett's ball in mid-field.

"Never saw anything like it—the fight this Staunton bunch are putting up!" commented a nervous Coach Stewart. "Our boys have been playing hard football this whole half and look how little they have to show for it!"

The situation was such that an ordinarily cocksure Bo Hardy was worried. He had been trying to reveal as few trick plays as possible, knowing there were scouts in the stadium from both Parnell and Ludlow. But this rampaging Staunton gang might force him to pull some new plays out of the bag to win. Staunton's defense was absolutely inspired. The invaders had knocked down attempted passes, broken up end plays and stopped line plunges for little or no gain. Garrett was playing a game of major in-

tensity which she had figured on coasting through!

"We've got to save our face at least!" Captain Russ Willard was appealing. "Come on, gang—let's stop fooling and get that second touchdown!"

"Stop fooling!" whistled an all but exhausted Trot Kimball, who had absorbed considerable punishment at left guard. "Whew! If this is fooling, then I don't ever hope to get in a real game!"

A criss-cross behind the line with left half Jim Morrison carrying the ball, was good for twenty yards. By the hardest kind of fighting, Garrett added another first down, advancing the ball to Staunton's nineteen yard line with three minutes left to play. Here the team went into a huddle and a wrangle developed on the proper signal to call.

"You're the captain," snapped Bo Hardy, nudging Russ as team members crouched, heads together. "What do you suggest?" Bo's voice was biting.

"A pass!" answered Russ instantly. "It's our only chance now!"

"Yeah?" retorted Bo. "You suggest a pass when Staunton's smothered our pass attack like a blanket!"

"That's why they won't be expecting us to pass—on this first down, anyway!" replied Russ, insistently. "Try it!"

"Okay," agreed Bo. "We'll call what the captain orders! . . . Signals . . .!"

The formation required Russ himself to do the passing. The ends got away nicely and eligible receivers filtered through the line but Staunton was covering desperately. Russ spotted right end Ping Eller apparently free on the five yard line and shot the ball toward him. A Staunton man suddenly leaped up out of nowhere to spear the pigskin and start running. He was pulled down from behind by Bo Hardy after reaching his own forty yard line.

"There's your pass!" was Bo's sarcastic comment as a despairing Garrett team lined up, once more on the defensive. And this is where it got you!"

"Then what did you ask my advice for?" flashed Russ.

"Because," responded Bo, warmly, "a cap-

tain's supposed to know what to do in a tight spot!"

"Lay off that stuff!" urged Jim, pushing Bo away. "We're all in here trying. That's all anybody can do!"

Staunton team members, badly spent from their heroic effort to hold a desperate Garrett, now grinned defiance. The game was all but over. Staunton's quarterback prepared to call three line plays for the purpose of using up the remaining time. The ball snapped back . . .

"Hey—a fumble!"

Garrett's line crashed through. Those in the stands caught a fleeting glimpse of a bounding pigskin which was almost immediately wiped out by diving forms. Into this pile the referee threw himself, pulling off player after player until he reached the bottom.

"Yea! Garrett's ball!"

Captain Russ Willard, the last to get up, had recovered for his team.

"That's what your captain does in a tight spot!" Jim couldn't resist flinging at Bo.

"We've time for about one play," calculated Garrett's quarterback. "Signals . . . !"

As his team hurriedly lined up, Bo Hardy called for a long pass—the passing play he had grudgingly called before. There was no other alternative now with Garrett some forty yards from Staunton's goal and the game in the last minute.

"It's a pass!" all Staunton shouted, as the ball went back to Russ who retreated into his back-field with eager Staunton men chasing him. Down the field a fleet Ping Eller raced, then cut over to his left and ran diagonal with the sidelines. As he changed his course, momentarily dodging the Staunton player covering him, Captain Russ Willard hurled the ball on a tremendous heave. On its leaving his fingers, Garrett fans sat chilled with the realization that victory or defeat hung in the balance.

"Get under it, Ping!" shrieked a high-pitched voice.

And Ping, seeing that the pass was going to clear him, started running once more toward the Staunton goal as a baseball outfielder, traveling after a fly ball. The Staunton interferer once again loomed into the picture, trailing Ping with every intent of knocking the ball down.

“Goodbye, game!” moaned the Garrett stands.

Leaping high in the air a frenzied Staunton interferer deflected the ball. He could not jump high enough to block it completely. In the interval of the ball's rebounding, however, Ping Eller stopped suddenly, lunged to the side and grabbed the pigskin before it touched the ground. But a few lurching steps away was the Staunton goal line. Taking no chances, Garrett's right end fairly threw himself the remaining distance with the Staunton man landing atop him.

“There she is!” yelled a delirious Jim Morrison as the timer's gun banged, ending the game. “Good boy, Russ—some pass!”

“Some catch!” was the comment of Garrett's captain as he, with fellow team-mates rushed down to the goal line to embrace a grinning Ping who was going through the motions of calling Staunton's attention to the scoreboard which now read:

GARRETT 13

STAUNTON 12

And here the score stayed as Russ Willard's attempted drop kick went wide but not a one minded, all Garrett being too overjoyed at the mere fact of having redeemed an apparently lost cause.

"Well, we're still undefeated up to our big games!" left guard Trot Kimball remarked when an exhausted squad reached the locker room.

"But you haven't a thing to crow about!" censured Coach Stewart, who had overheard. "What was the matter with you men out there this last half? Looked like the whole bunch of you were at sixes and sevens. You played like you didn't have a directing head. Bo—your choice of plays, at times, was terrible . . . !"

Garrett's quarterback looked meaningfully at Captain Russ Willard but said nothing.

"Russ," questioned Coach Stewart. "We've got to do something about this before the Parnell game or we won't have a Chinaman's chance. What would *you* say was the matter?"

It was a difficult spot for the fellow who had been elected leader against his wishes.

"I would say," he replied, after a moment's

hesitation, "that our trouble was—too many captains!"

By this frank comment, team members were given to know that Russ Willard had at last thrown down the gauntlet to Bo Hardy and brought his one-man-feud into the open for the possible good of the team.

"To many captains?" repeated Coach Stewart, temporarily perplexed.

"It's the same as too many cooks," Russ explained with a forced smile. "I told the fellows at the time that Bo was the logical man for captain. And right now I'm willing to step down and out in favor of Bo if it'll ease his mind and create harmony. I appreciate the title of captain but it doesn't mean enough to me to jeopardize our chances of winning. If Bo wants it—let him have it. He's too valuable a man to be put off his game on something that's really unimportant to me."

A prickling silence followed, team members registering profound astonishment at Russ Willard's unexpected proposal.

"I wouldn't be captain now if you gave it to me!" a tight-lipped youth finally answered, his

voice quavering with pent-up emotion. "That's a darn fine offer on your part, Russ, if you really mean it . . . ?"

"Of course he means it!" assured Jim, reprovingly. "Why can't you two shake hands and forget it? We've had a close enough call on your account!"

An upwrought Bo Hardy looked debatingly about him at fellow team-mates. His pride was stubborn. It was easy for Jim to urge him to "forget it" but he *couldn't* forget the squad's voting against him. He knew now that he actually held no grudge against Russ. It was just the fact that Russ stood for the thing he had wanted to be. As he hesitated, with all eyes upon him, struggling within himself to do what his better judgment told him he should do, Coach Stewart cut short his golden opportunity to make amends by terse command: "To the showers—all of you!"

CHAPTER III

STAUNTON HIGH's throwing of a scare into Garrett's football camp by forcing her team to the utmost to eke out a 13 to 12 victory, thoroughly ironed out any disposition toward over-confidence with regard to the approaching big game against Parnell.

"You fellows have a week of hard work cut out for you," had been Coach Stewart's stern mandate on Monday and he had driven the squad hard until Thursday when he commenced tapering off with signal practice and a running through of the plays especially designed for use in the Parnell encounter.

Bo Hardy, following the scene in the locker room after the Staunton game when he had evidenced reluctance to make up with Captain Russ Willard, had conducted himself quite properly and capably on the field. He had gone at his work seriously—almost too seriously, in fact—and it was largely due to his efforts that Garrett's eleven had reached a machine-like precision.

"In our present form," Coach Stewart was encouraged to declare, "we should have no alibi to offer if defeated. I feel, judging from comparative seasonal records, that we have an even chance to win."

The newspapers summed up the prospects in much the same way. One sports writer went further by declaring: "Barring another unexplained lapse of playing form, Garrett appears prepared to give Parnell a battle royal. But Quarterback Bo Hardy's erratic actions, of late, make Garrett's performance somewhat of a speculation. There's no one any better than Garrett's peppery field general when he's himself but when he's off, the whole team's off. It is rumored that Coach Stewart declared there was no reason for Staunton's giving Garrett such a close call except that the team was not pulling together, due to internal friction. Just what this friction was about, this writer has been unable to determine, since members of Garrett's football squad have evidently been instructed not to talk. At any rate, it is to be hoped that all bygones are bygones because Garrett will need every ounce of teamwork against Parnell!"

Bo Hardy, on reading the item, decided it was not of a sort that he wanted pasted on the mirror of his dresser. Earlier season accounts had been most flattering. As a result the edges of the mirror had become quite decorated with clippings.

"That reporter knows what it's all about," ranted Bo. "He's just keeping the reason under cover. Suppose he doesn't want to embarrass me too much but he's taking a crack at me just the same. Say—I'd like to know where this team would be without *me!*!"

Russ Willard, naturally quiet and unassuming, had been given considerable time to ponder about in Bo's attitude. It was incomprehensible to him how any fellow could get so worked up over failure to be made captain. But Bo evidently felt the situation very keenly to have refrained from shaking hands with him when Jim, acting as self-appointed mediator, had suggested that they forget their differences.

"If Bo wasn't quarterback, it wouldn't be so bad," reflected Russ. "But he's in a spot, just as that sport writer points out, where the least thing he does wrong affects the team. From the

way Bo acted last Saturday, I know he's too proud to come to me. I guess I'd better take my hat in hand and call on him. We've got to get this thing patched up, somehow, before we play Parnell!"

And so, on the eve of the Parnell game, Russ Willard managed to leave the locker room at the time Bo Hardy did. It was dusk as the two struck out along the pebbled walk which led to the street from the field. Back of them the gray outline of the High School stadium cast its shadow which seemed ominous of the battle to come. Another sunrise would bring a howling mob to the now barren stands . . . and the Gridiron, at present carefully protected beneath a covering of canvas, would be alive with struggling forms. Here, on the turf where Garrett had fought honorably for victory and suffered honorable defeat—a new drama would be unreeled. And nothing in this drama must be permitted to spoil the happy climax of the day—a climax which could only be made happy by virtue of a Garrett triumph.

"Hey, Bo—what's your hurry!" Russ called, hastening his steps.

Garrett's quarterback, imagining himself to be alone since he had been shunning the companionship of his fellows of late, looked startled over his shoulder.

"Got to get home," he replied, tersely.
"What's on your mind?"

"Plenty," said Russ, falling in alongside.
"Let's cut in here and have a go around the cinder path. It'll only take fifteen minutes."

"I've got to be home in that time," hedged Bo. "Say what you've got to say and get it over with."

"Come on!" ordered Russ, shouldering Bo to the right and down a path leading to a stadium entrance. "You not going to give me the run-around again. This is too important."

Bo glanced at Russ sharply. "Well, then, make it snappy!"

"Thanks," spoke Garrett's captain, directing the team quarterback through the gate and onto the dirt track. "There's nobody out here to see us. I figured you'd prefer it."

Bo nodded, lips pressed tight together.

"First," parried Russ, "I'd like to apologize to you."

"What for?" Bo looked surprised.

"For that crack I made to the coach about 'too many captains,'" said Russ.

"Oh," said Bo, and gave a vent to a dry laugh.
"That was all right."

The two had fallen automatically into the same stride, a rather accentuated walking step, and were pacing off around the track, gradually increasing their speed in keeping with their emotions.

"It wasn't all right," denied Russ, condemningly. "This should really have been an affair strictly between you and me. The other fellows shouldn't have been let in on it."

"They knew about it," said Bo. "You wouldn't have kept anything from them."

"Yes—but I'd have saved you something," Russ insisted. "I didn't understand then how a fellow could miss not being captain so much. I don't exactly understand now but I've decided that I should have been more considerate. I suppose your viewpoint's different than mine. Besides, I'm not so sensitive."

Garrett's quarterback made no reply to these remarks at once. He kept step with his head

down. The moon suddenly emerged from behind a cloud bank. Darkness had fallen swiftly. The mid-November air was chilly. Standing like ghosts the white "H" outlines of the goal posts reared at either end of the field which was surrounded by the cinder track. A few more games and Bo Hardy would leave this scene behind. It would continue to exist only in the shadowland of his own memory. Russ Willard, however, would return for one more year. But both of them now had their immediate destinies wrapped up in the possible outcome of Garrett's two big games. At the moment what each might do to help bring victory seemed more important than matters of world import.

"It wouldn't have been so bad," Bo found himself confessing, "but I was so sure I was going to be elected that I wrote my Uncle Fred I'd been chosen captain. He was captain of his school eleven for two years and I was his favorite nephew. Uncle Fred used to kid me in the letters he'd write. He said if I was really good that the fellows would make me a captain like he was. I'd expected to get the honor last

year when the guys handed it to Bart Owen, partly to be doing something nice for him on account of his getting hurt in the Ludlow game. But I didn't think there'd be any question about their choosing me *this* season. And it wasn't till I began to get anxious after writing my Uncle that I started asking the fellows about who they were going to pick."

"That's where you made your mistake," criticized Russ, "The fellows didn't like your plugging for yourself. You shouldn't have counted on anything till it really happened."

"I know that now," admitted Bo, ruefully. "I must have been pretty swell-headed to have taken so much for granted. But I actually thought I was the best player on the team . . ."

"You were," insisted Russ, "and, if this helps any, you still are!"

"My uncle still thinks I'm captain," Bo went on. "I've hated to write and tell him the truth."

"You'd better do it," advised Russ, "you'll feel better."

The darkness seemed to invite a flow of thoughts and feelings long repressed. Russ Willard thrilled at the success of his venture to

make amends with the fellow who had opposed him. Since Bo had spoken his mind, Russ was better able to sympathize.

"Uncle Fred is a stickler for honesty," Bo was replying. "So is Dad! He has no use for a man who goes under false pretenses. If he knew what I'd written to Uncle . . . !"

"That's why you'd better explain right away," suggested Russ. "The longer you wait, the tougher it's going to be. You can tell your Uncle you had every reason to think when you wrote that . . . !"

"Yes, I've thought of that," broke in Bo, "but it still makes it sound so cheap."

"You naturally feel it more keenly than anyone else," soothed Russ. "But being the star player is more important to my mind than being captain. If you make a good showing in our two big games . . . !"

"I've got to!" said Bo, fervently. "It's my only chance to redeem myself! . . . Maybe after the Parnell game tomorrow . . . if we come out all right . . . I can write Uncle and fix things up. He expects me to give him reports on the big games. You see, Uncle is figuring on send-

ing me to his college since Dad can't afford . . .!"

Bo Hardy checked himself. He had not so intended but here he was, practically revealing everything to the fellow he had tried to hate.

"You can count on me tomorrow," Russ promised as they completed encircling the track. "I'll give you all I've got."

Bo held out his hand. "I'm sorry I gave you the razz. I had to get rid of my feelings some way."

Russ grinned. "Just so I know now you don't have it in for me. I'll tell the fellows . . .!"

"No you won't!" flashed Bo, feelingly. "I'm not looking for sympathy. They can think what they like. I don't want you to say a thing!"

"You're the doctor," acceded Russ, "but, in my opinion, you're making it unnecessarily hard for yourself!"

"That's my business," replied Bo, determinedly. "The fellows thought they had me all figured out before. Let them figure me out now!"

Captain Russ Willard wisely took no further issue with Garrett's quarterback. He had already accomplished more than he had dared anticipate. That a certain feeling toward the fellows in general still remained was evident. But, with the Parnell game awaiting the morrow, Russ was mightily thankful for the *patching* he had done.

For some years Garrett had patiently awaited the development of a team possessing the power to grant it an even chance of achieving a most successful season by winning both big games. Ironically enough, with many predicting that this year had now arrived, came also reports from Parnell and Ludlow that these larger schools boasted the strongest teams in history.

"All the more to our credit if we come through!" was the way Garrett sportsmen looked at it.

Garrett's shaky exhibition against an inspired Staunton had been the one doubtful mark to blot an otherwise all but perfect season. Team followers ardently hoped that Garrett's faltering would prove but momentary. However,

a big question mark remained which could only be erased on the field of battle.

"What we've got to do is let Garrett know that we've worlds of faith in her!" declared a loyal rooter. "The fellows will probably be wondering about their own strength after last Saturday. But when they hear what we think of 'em . . . !"

And when Garrett *did* hear, as the squad bounded onto the crisp field, the blast of cheers was enough to warm chilled hearts. It sent an electric tingle up each backbone and stiffened spines of those who had permitted themselves to think too much of the formidable enemy.

Parnell rooters were present a thousand strong, lustily challenging every Garret cheer. The air was cool enough so that white puffs issued from every throat as the lungs gave forth their roars. An ideal day for football which found the Garrett High stadium packed to capacity and spectators lining nearby housetops, trees and telephone poles.

"Something tells me you'll have plenty to write your Uncle Fred about!" Russ managed to communicate to a highly keyed Bo Hardy as

the teams lined up with Parnell kicking off.

Bo's face creased in a faint grin. "Here's hoping!" he said.

From the opening kick-off, Garrett's clash with Parnell was a tornado of action. Up and down the gridiron the cyclonic elements swirled and tossed and tumbled. First the blue jerseys of Garrett flashed and rumbled against the red of Parnell. Then the red jerseys gathered storm force and changed directions until red and blue were all but lost in a maze of blended color and dirt. Outstanding for Garrett in that first bitter half was the fellow who played quarterback. His strident voice and driving manner was apparent to all in the stands . . . exhorting, pleading, compelling . . . Bo Hardy was the first lieutenant of the Garrett line. He forced it to hold, unyielding, in the face of two Parnell advances when it seemed that fresh substitutes, rushed in as reinforcements, could not stay the onslaught. He whipped the line into a frenzied attack using Captain Russ Willard mercilessly as a battering ram. With a bare fifty seconds remaining of the first half, Commander Bo Hardy, looking with apparent contempt on so

lowly an officer as the team captain, martialed his bruised and weary forces on Parnell's three yard line.

"Give Russ the ball! He'll take it over!" shrieked pop-eyed Garrett fans, who had seen Garrett's captain do a herculean job in gaining most of the yardage on his eleven's great advance.

But Bo Hardy, disdaining the intreaties of the populace, crossed up a tottering and bewildered Parnell, entrenched on the goal line, by taking the ball himself and going over for the touchdown on a wide end run as Captain Russ faked a plunge at center.

"Yea!" roared Garrett.

"Great stuff all right!" shouted a rooter.
"But imagine Bo taking the glory of that advance away from Russ after his doing all the heavy work!"

"That's football!" retorted another. "Russ was about all in. Bo was playing for the touchdown . . . he wasn't thinking of the glory!"

A murmur of disappointment went through the stands as Captain Russ Willard missed the try for extra point. His drop kick failed to rise,

being partially blocked by a desperate Parnell. The gun banged for the half as the play was in motion. Score: Garrett, 6; Parnell, 0.

"Good boy, Bo!" gasped Russ, as the two headed for the clubhouse surrounded by fellow players. "Sorry I let you down on that extra point."

"Couldn't be helped," was Bo's comment. "You think I handled things all right?"

"Handled?" repeated Russ, quizzically. "Say—you just about man-handled me. I believe I kicked to you once about not being called on enough. You can disregard that protest from now on!"

A flash of grim amusement crossed Bo's face. He seemed only interested in Russ's reactions to his playing. Words of praise hurled at him by other team-mates met with only stony silence. In the locker room for the rest period, Bo plainly indicated that he wished to be off by himself.

"Funny duck," mused Jim, who knew more of Bo's nature than most. "He imagines that his brilliant playing is rubbing it into the fellows for their not making him captain. And because

he solicited their votes before, he's being extra careful not to solicit their compliments now!"

Coach Stewart, elated at the great fight his men were putting up, said that he could ask no more than the same performance in the half to come. To which, a considerably battered Trot Kimball, replied: "Brother, I think that's *plenty!*"

CHAPTER IV

WITH Garrett having drawn first blood, Parnell came back with sharpened sabers and took the kick-off, resolved to slash her way through for a tying touchdown. Knifing end runs and stabs at the line enabled Parnell to cut deep into Garrett territory. Each time, however, Captain Russ Willard and Quarterback Bo Hardy, standing almost shoulder to shoulder, called upon their cohorts in the line to hold . . . and the ball was taken on downs, once inside Garrett's five yard line. Then it was that Russ Willard's toe rocketed the pigskin out of dangerous territory, far down the field, punts which averaged fifty yards. This was a high-school game which rivaled a college contest.

Desperately, Parnell took to the air as the last quarter started. And just as desperately did Garrett spread out to cover the passing attack. Thrown almost strictly on the defensive by Parnell's ferocious attempt to score, Garrett was occupying a role which Staunton had played

so effectively against her. To hold a lead of six slender points was indeed precarious. But Parnell carried the greater burden as the minutes waned . . . and Garrett's burden became correspondingly less.

"This is going to be a great game to win!" exclaimed an excited Garrett supporter. "Some comeback from last Saturday! We'd have run up fifty points on Staunton today!"

"Perhaps not fifty—but surely twenty-five!" corrected a more conservative rooter.

"Who cares?" bubbled a third. "The main thing is—we're winning!"

With four minutes to go, it was Parnell's ball at midfield. A pass failed. Garrett smothered an end run. Another pass, into the flat zone, was good for a twelve yard gain and a first down. Parnell was dying hard. Still another pass was tried. It clicked for fourteen more yards and the Parnell stands went mad with hope. Ball on Garrett's twenty-four yard mark.

"That's about far enough!" said Captain Russ Willard as Coach Stewart sent in three new linesmen to replace weary veterans who stumbled to the sidelines. "You can write your

Uncle for me, Bo, that this Parnell bunch are tough babies!"

"We're lucky to have gotten the one touch-down!" muttered Garrett's quarterback as he slapped the substitutes on the back and pushed them into position.

"You engineered that!" said Russ. "If it hadn't been for you . . . !"

"What you talking about?" snapped Bo, disparagingly. "You mean—if it hadn't been for you . . . !"

"Look out—there goes a long pass!"

Parnell's quarterback faded far back with the ball cupped in his hand.

"Break that up!" cried Bo, watching the play.

The pass went out to the side where Parnell's right end had twisted free. Bo Hardy saw that the end was going to make the catch and dashed toward him at once as the Parnell rooters came to their feet with an explosive roar.

"Get him, Bo!" yelled Russ, too far removed to be of any aid.

The receiver of the pass had what looked to be a clear field to a touchdown but Bo, giving

frenzied chase, brought him down from behind on Garrett's three yard line. A first down for Parnell—three yards to go in four downs—and a fraction over two minutes to play.

"You can write your Uncle about that, too!" cried Captain Russ Willard, giving Bo credit. "That tackle was a game-saver!"

"I don't know," answered Bo, worriedly. "We've still got to hold 'em!"

"Watch us!" volunteered left guard Trot Kimball. "After what you just did? They'll lose ground in four downs!"

Lining up speedily, playing now against time, the Parnell quarterback tried a drive through tackle. It gained a yard. He sent the next play straight at a tiring Trot Kimball who grabbed an armful of legs and hung on. The legs crumpled and bodies fell on Garrett's fighting left guard but when all were untangled, Parnell had not gained six inches. A quick pass was tried and batted down. Finally, massing for one last attack, Parnell again tried to crack Garrett's line and pushed it back to the goal where the ball went over, resting directly on the chalk mark!

Half a minute to play—with Garrett supporters cheering wildly at their team's heroic stand in the shadow of the goal posts, staving off possible defeat by denying Parnell a touch-down.

"We've whitewashed 'em!" sang a spectator. "Talk about big games! This is the biggest one I ever saw!"

Captain Russ Willard, now grinning broadly, retreated back of the goal line and held out his hands for the ball.

"I'll punt the old pigskin out of sight!" he promised.

"The game will be over before it comes down!" rejoined a relieved Bo Hardy. Then, as the teams lined up, he called the signals: "Punt formation . . . !"

Back shot the ball from center . . . a pass none too accurate, a trifle low and to the side. Captain Russ reached out to grab it with Parnell men breaking through, beseeched by a thousand throats to "Block that kick!" Battered as he had been by his first half work at smashing the line . . . and his second half work at backing up his own line on defensive, Russ may not have

been his usual dependable self. At any rate, in that most important of moments, he juggled the pigskin . . . and while trying to settle it in his hands . . . and to dodge hurling forms so that he could still get his kick away . . . Russ was hit by a seeming avalanche, the ball bounding from his grasp.

Bo Hardy, acting as interference for his captain, dived after the free ball but the swarming Parnell men brushed him aside and piled in a heap over the spot where the pigskin had disappeared.

An agonizing moment of suspense followed with the gun banging to technically end the game.

“Parnell’s ball!” ruled the referee, raising his arm. “Touchdown!”

The official scorer slid a number “6” in the scoreboard opposite the name of Parnell High, a number which matched the number in the Garrett slot.

“Yea!” resounded Parnell rooters. “Get that extra point now, boys, and we’ll go home!”

“The best thing we can hope for now is a tie,” mourned a Garrett fan, disconsolately.

“One little play and Russ undid all the good work he’d done the whole game!”

“I wouldn’t say that,” defended a kinder fan.

With time allowed for Parnell’s try for point after touchdown, the two elevens lined up in front of the goal posts.

“Don’t let ‘em score!” Quarterback Bo Hardy raged, running along behind his linesmen and punching them into the line, ragging them to get through and block a kick or a pass.

“Try to stop us!” taunted an elated Parnell.

And Garrett hearts sank as the kick was good—the ball skimming cleanly over the uprights to give Parnell “7” against Garrett’s “6.”

Then it was that the field became a bedlam of sound with Parnell fans swarming down to gather team members up on their shoulders and begin a delirious victory march. But for Garrett the occasion was extremely sad. Her supporters sat all but unbelievably in the stands, scarce able to realize that a most glorious triumph had been snatched away in the very last seconds of play . . . and through the ignominy of a fumble by Garrett’s own captain!

“I’ll never live this down!” choked Russ as,

with tears streaking his face, he headed for the dressing room, followed by dejected team-mates who had fought so valiantly to hold the narrow lead. Big game number one was past history—and what history it might have been but for the one misplay!

"Too bad, Russ," said Coach Stewart, who met him at the door. "It was a great game to win or lose. Don't mind that fumble too much. I'm not holding it against you!"

"Thanks, Coach," Russ managed, "You may not be holding it against me—but *I* am!"

Passing on into the locker room where he tore off his clothes to get under the shower, Russ was suddenly accosted by an irate Bo Hardy who had been prevented by the crowd from catching up to him as he hurriedly left the field.

"You big bonehead, you!" were Bo's first words. "When you found you couldn't kick the ball, why didn't you fall on it and let Parnell score a *safety* against us? That would only have counted two points and we'd have won—six to two!"

Garrett's captain stared, open-mouthed, for

a moment. Then, his chagrin, if anything, deepened.

"I—I never thought of it," he confessed. "All I could think of was kicking that ball . . . and when I juggled that poor pass . . . !"

"*Poor pass!*!" caught up Garrett's quarterback, feelingly. "So you're going to try to palm the blame for your fumble off on our center, are you?"

"No!" retorted Russ, face turning crimson. "I just meant . . . !"

"A swell captain, you are!" razzed Bo. "Something for me to write my Uncle about, eh? There was no excuse for you missing that ball! If you'd just kicked our point after touchdown we'd at least have had a tie . . . but you had to spoil my good play by handing Parnell the game on a platter!"

"See here, Bo!" broke in Jim Morrison. "Listen, Buddy—cool off, will you? You don't suppose Russ lost the game on purpose, do you? We all wanted to win this!"

"We should have won it!" raged Bo, his feelings getting the better of him. "I've said all along Russ wasn't so hot. This is the guy

you fellows elected captain. I hope you're satisfied!"

"You bet we're satisfied!" came an answering chorus.

Garrett's quarterback glared at those about him who, in this moment of bitter defeat, were pledging allegiance to the man who had cost them victory. And, as he glared, smitten by a sudden remorse that he had lost control of himself, he heard Captain Russ Willard's voice addressing him. "There's one thing you *can* write your uncle," the voice was saying, cuttingly. "Tell him for me that you're a darn poor loser!"

Bo Hardy, biting his quivering lips, turned his back on fellow team members and fumbled with the combination on his locker.

"Oh, well—some team's always got to lose," he heard his former buddy, Jim Morrison philosophizing. "Parnell may have beaten us out by an eyewinker—but the other big game's not going to get away from us. Heaven help poor Ludlow! What do you say, guys?"

"Poor Ludlow is right!" echoed the squad, which was indication enough to a thoroughly

humiliated Bo Hardy that "heads might be bloody but unbowed."

And, while feeling quite alone and apart from the spirit manifested, Bo Hardy became conscious of a great resolve welling up within him.

"I've been a poor sport," he told himself.
"I've got to square myself somehow!"

CHAPTER V

To be the captain of the team and to be pointed out as the fellow whose untimely fumble in the last minute of play had lost the big Parnell game was not exactly an enviable position. Russ Willard, in the week that followed, had occasion to reflect, ruefully, that any team-mate could have the captaincy for the asking. Somehow, the mere fact of his being captain had seemed to add to the disgrace which was his. In one unintended but, nevertheless, fell stroke, he had reduced to nought the heroic efforts of fellow team-mates who were on the verge of being joyously acclaimed by victory-anticipating Garrett supporters.

"I couldn't have picked a worse spot to fumble," Russ repeated regretfully, over and over. That his great line plunging had led up to Garrett's only touchdown had been entirely forgotten in the light of the one damaging misplay. "I don't wonder Bo jumped on me," Russ considered, the more he thought about the

matter. "I was stupid, there's no getting around it. Why I didn't drop on the ball for a touchback and prevent Parnell from the chance at a touchdown is a mystery to me. I suppose, though, it's easier to figure what to do after an emergency is over with. But, in all fairness to Bo, I do believe he'd have done what he said I should have done, if he'd been in my shoes! Thank heaven he wasn't. I wouldn't wish my situation on anyone!"

Quarterback Bo Hardy, if the truth were known, felt almost as miserable as Captain Russ Willard. Before the Parnell game he had rejoiced at having made his peace with Russ and had begun to feel quite reconciled to not having been chosen captain as expected. His impetuous actions toward Russ, following Garrett's startling defeat, however, had shattered the peace and placed him in greater disfavor with the fellows.

Garrett's return to winning ways in trouncing Edgewood, 28 to 0, in the game prior to the next big encounter with Ludlow, failed to excite the fans. Hopes had been built so high in advance of the Parnell clash that Garrett sup-

porters were reserving their opinions this time.

"We've got a great eleven—make no mistake about that!" one sports authority declared. "One swallow doesn't make a summer and neither does one defeat make a debacle. We cheered for an undefeated season this year but we've no reason to kick if we finish with only one blot upon our escutcheon."

"Escutcheon is a good word," grinned another. "We've really a great opportunity ahead to redeem ouselves. Judging by comparative scores of teams that both Parnell and Ludlow have defeated, this Ludlow outfit is at least a touchdown better than Parnell. This should give us something to shoot at."

"We'll shoot all right—with everything we've got!" predicted a loyal supporter, joining in on the discussion. "Russ Willard's been telling around school that he's going to atone for that fumble. They say that he and Bo had it out after the game, so you can bet that both of them will be in fighting trim when we tackle Ludlow!"

In Ludlow the tendency, after studying the news report of the Garrett-Parnell game and

listening to the account of scouts sent to cover the battle, was to take Garrett not so seriously.

"We should win by two touchdowns at least," opined Ludlow team members. "Garrett's an over-estimated eleven this season. Besides, her morale has been lowered by Parnell's coming from behind to win—and it's doubtful if she reaches her peak again."

Despite Ludlow's confidence of triumph, her supporters considered it well worthwhile to journey to Garrett for the game. Triumph for Ludlow meant an undefeated season for one of the greatest elevens in her school history. That it was the last contest on the schedule for the two rivals lifted the conflict also in importance. A capacity crowd had witnessed the Parnell-Garrett engagement but, for the Ludlow battle, five hundred extra seats were put in at the ends of the field, with accomodations still lacking for many who desired to cheer the elevens on.

"There'd be more real suspense if Garrett had beaten Parnell," said a spectator shortly before the teams took the field. "But, even so, there's suspense enough!"

In the Garrett locker room a high-tensioned

squad of football men shuffled nervously about, tied and re-tied their shoes or repeated some other trivial duty as a means of killing time until the word should come to take the gridiron. To-day brought the Garrett eleven to the end of its football road with its objective not quite attained. The outcome of the Ludlow game would determine how close or how far Garrett had come from hitting the mark. A victory would do much to offset the sting of Parnell's defeat. To lose to Ludlow would mean a collapse of fondest Garrett hopes. At least one of the big games must be won to count the season a success.

"Do we win or don't we?" expounded Coach Stewart on concluding his instructions to the team.

"We *win!*!" cried Garrett to a man.

"All right!" challenged the Coach. "Go on out there now—and let's see you do it!"

A fighting mad squad leaped to its feet and rushed for the door. Ludlow was going to pay for Garrett's failure against Parnell. This thought was uppermost in each team member's mind—and particularly was it impressed upon

the mind and heart of Quarterback Bo Hardy and Captain Russ Willard. Since Bo's verbal assault upon Russ, the two had been unspeaking . . . and, now, as they bumped each other at the door, the two exchanged defiant glances.

"I'll show you!" Bo's glance seemed to say, while Russ appeared to be thinking: "I won't be the goat again! Call on me all you want, old fellow—and I'll come through for you!"

Bo had secretly hoped that Russ would approach him again before game time and make overtures toward a second reconciliation. But he sensed, inwardly, that this was too much to expect. Rather was it distinctly his place to go to Russ and offer abject apology—but, try as he might, Bo's pride would not permit him to do so.

"I'm in the wrong and I can't make myself admit it to the gang," Bo confessed to himself. "The moment I do, I'm also admitting they were right in choosing Russ, captain over me . . . and that's going too far. I wouldn't admit that to anyone . . . Why, I made the only touchdown against Parnell . . . and, if I have any luck, I'll star against Ludlow, too. Then

I may feel like writing my uncle and telling him that I'm not captain after all . . . that I was a little . . . er . . . *premature* in believing that I'd be elected . . . and ask him to pardon me. I think he'll do it providing I play well enough!"

Captain Russ Willard met Jay Hudson, Ludlow captain, in the center of the field. A coin was tossed and Russ lost. Ludlow elected to receive the kick-off. The teams lined up, eager Garrett men stretching across the field just back of the upended ball which Russ prepared to kick.

"Are you ready?" called the referee.

Both captains raised their arms; the whistle screeched; Russ ran forward, his wall of teammates following. His foot met the pigskin and sent it turning end over end, far down into a corner of Ludlow's territory. An interference quickly formed about the Ludlow receiver who started running. Garrett men threw themselves at these interferers in an effort to reach the ball carrier. Spectators came to their feet with a roar as it was seen that Ludlow's return of the kick-off was inspired. Ten, twenty, thirty

yards—the ball was run back. And now the fleet-footed quarterback of the Ludlow eleven who had the ball, was out on his own . . . dodging, twisting, veering sharply toward the further sidelines and leaving most of the wide-eyed Garrett tacklers behind him.

"He's away to a clear field!" shrieked Ludlowites, joyfully.

And so he was, with Quarterback Bo Hardy giving desperate chase and Captain Russ Willard just at his heels. But the Ludlow quarterback was a ten second man in the dashes, the pride of Ludlow's track team, and a ten yard lead was ordinarily as good as a mile to him. Urged on by frantic Ludlow rooters he fairly galloped toward Garrett's goal line, with Bo Hardy painfully closing the gap between them and Russ Willard falling further and further back. Even so, there was no catching Ludlow's fast little man and he circled behind the goal posts, touching the ball to earth to complete a ninety-six yard run for a touchdown from the opening kick-off, a feat seldom accomplished.

"That's how we run through your team!" shrilled a gleeful Ludlow fan.

There was no question but what the suddenness of Ludlow's scoring had been shocking to a determined Garrett. The players seemed all but stupefied as they lined up to contest Ludlow's attempt for an extra point after touchdown. And they still acted in a daze as the Ludlow quarterback was given the honor of place-kicking the additional point to give his team a 7 to 0 lead in the first two minutes of play.

"Never mind that, gang!" Russ consoled. "Heads up! That's all they're going to get the whole game!"

Garrett braced courageously though apparent to all that Ludlow's achievement had given her the edge. The first half resolved itself into a kicking duel as both elevens set up stiff defenses. Here it was that Captain Russ Willard excelled. His punts carried far and were well placed, with Garrett gradually gaining ground on the exchanges. It seemed but a matter of time before the home eleven would be advanced within scoring distance. And then came a second break, more disheartening than the first. With the half nearly over, Russ punted out of bounds on Ludlow's three yard line. Bo Hardy im-

pulsively broke his silence to cry out: "Great stuff, Russ! That puts 'em in a real hole!"

Garrett supporters, screaming encouragement, watched breathlessly as the Ludlow quarterback retreated behind his goal line to kick out of danger.

"Break through and block that kick!" Russ begged of the linesmen.

And Garrett linesmen responded, smashing Ludlow's great line to bits as they dived through in an effort to duplicate Parnell's performance against them. The pass from center was very bad but the Ludlow quarterback managed to catch the ball. Apparently realizing instantly that he could not get off a kick, the quarterback dodged Garrett forms hurtling at him and did an amazing thing. He drew back his arm and threw a tremendous forward pass! His ends, who had torn down the field, gulped their astonishment and set out for the spot where the ball would land. The Ludlow right end grabbed the pigskin almost out of Bo Hardy's hands as he raced in, trying for an interception. And, once again, Bo found himself chasing a pair of flying heels with the field gone mad.

But it was no use. The Ludlow quarterback's brilliant piece of thinking had converted a possible touchback or even touchdown against his team into another touchdown for Ludlow.

"Smartest bit of football I ever saw!" said Coach Stewart, in all fairness. "Wish I had that boy on my team!"

As he spoke Ludlow's quarterback missed the try for extra point.

"Well, that proves he's human anyhow!" breathed a Garrett rooter. "I'd begun to think that baby had been born with horseshoes on both feet and a four-leaved-clover between his teeth."

"A new-born baby doesn't have teeth," reminded someone nearby.

"Don't kid yourself," was the rooter's quick retort. "That particular baby had his wisdom teeth cut at birth. I'll bet on it!"

The timer's gun banged; end of the first half.
Score: Ludlow, 13; Garrett, 0.

"There's our two touchdown lead!" remarked a jubilant Ludlow player, as the team left the field. "And we're even better than that!"

A glum Garrett squad trooped into the club-house and dropped down on benches, staring at one another.

"How you going to beat that kind of playing?" demanded right end Ping Eller. "Talk about *breaks!*!"

"Yeah, but they *made* the breaks," replied Captain Russ. "Just the same—outside those couple breaks—we're as good as they are! And—next half . . .!"

But the spirit which had animated Garrett team members at the start of the game was no longer present. A conviction had settled upon them that they were whipped. They did not say so in so many words but their attitudes belied it. And nothing that Russ could declare or that Bo could add or that Coach Stewart could express appeared to rouse them from their gloomy acceptance of a fate which seemed to be awaiting them.

Bo Hardy, sensing this lost morale, appealed to those veterans who were playing their last game for Garrett. His appeal was directed at his old buddy, Jim Morrison, left half; Trot Kimball, left guard; and Ping Eller, right end.

"Listen, you guys—hold the team up, can't you? . . . Don't let 'em go to pieces! We've got to pull this out somehow. We mustn't lose the last game we're ever going to play for Garrett!"

"We're not quitting," answered Jim. "We're in there for all we've got!"

"But that's not enough!" said Bo, eyes blazing. "We've got to make up for these birds who've folded in the middle! If we can pull something between us, we'll restore their confidence!"

"Why don't you talk to Russ?" asked Jim. "He's the key man on our offense! We need him more than anyone else!"

Bo's face flushed. "You speak to him, Jim. I can't," he said, strainedly. "Tell him I'll use him plenty this half. Tell him I'll give him a chance to make up for that fumble!"

"Okay," said Jim, grimly. "I'll tell him."

Captain Russ Willard took the message, unblinking.

"Tell Bo, while he's about it, not to forget to show something himself!" was his retort.

CHAPTER VI

WITH four out of eleven men to hang his hopes on, Quarterback Bo Hardy set to work figuring out an attack which would enable these four to bear the brunt. His rival quarterback had left him far in the ruck insofar as individual brilliance was concerned. Bo's hopes of shining in this game were small as compared to the Ludlow field general whose name was already destined to appear in sporting headlines. But Garrett's quarterback burned with the desire to get his team back into a fight which most of the eleven had decided was hopeless. He wasn't the captain but his position gave him command and he intended to exercise his authority as never before. It would be his last chance to demonstrate his real ability . . . to prove to the fellows that they, in some particulars, had misjudged him.

Ludlow kicked off and the ball came to Bo. He was off with Russ just ahead of him, forming interference. Jim moved over swiftly

from the side, falling in behind Russ. Trot Kimball lumbered in from the other side and down the field they went, other team-members doing what they could to clear the way. Trot was the first to go down, taking a tackler with him as he did so. Jim went next, preventing a certain tackle as Bo sidestepped. Then Russ blocked off two Ludlow men and hit the dirt himself, leaving Bo to go on alone. By this time Bo had reached midfield, with the Garrett stands in an uproar, but here he found himself hemmed in, being run out of bounds on Ludlow's forty-eight yard line after a sensational dash of forty-two yards, the longest run of the day for Garrett.

"That's more like it!" approved a Garrett supporter.

"Good work, Bo, old boy!" grinned Jim, coming up. "You sure set a swell example. We'll have to go some to follow you!"

"Signals . . . !" was Bo's peppy answer.

It was Jim's number he was calling and Jim went around end for two yards.

"Signals . . . !"

Russ Willard next. He responded with a

plunge through a hole opened by Trot Kimball at left guard.

"How's that?" demanded Trot, as Russ made four yards. "Did I do my bit?"

"Do it again!" barked Bo, and sent Russ through the same position for five yards this time and a first down.

"Hey!" gasped Trot, wide-eyed. "I can't open up holes right along. This baby I'm up against is tough!"

"Get back in that line!" ordered Bo. "You'll open up a hole any time I want it!" Then, to the other Garrett team members who had begun to perk up as a result of the performance, he shouted: "What's the matter with you men? Letting Jim and Trot and Russ do all the work? Snap into it! You're supposed to be playing football!"

Smarting under Bo's continued tongue-lashing, Garrett's line stiffened its resistance. The Ludlow team felt the increased pressure and attempted to answer it. But Captain Russ Willard had become a charge of human dynamite. He shot himself against the Ludlow line with great force. Sometimes an unrelenting

Bo used him as much as three times in succession and Russ was consistently good for from two to five yards. He fairly ate up ground toward the Ludlow goal and the entire stadium was going wild.

"Stop that pile driver!" screeched a Ludlow fan. "He's tearing our line to pieces! Work out a defense against him, you guys!"

And just as a greatly concerned Ludlow threw in reinforcements against him, Quarterback Bo Hardy switched to a trick play, Russ passing the ball to Jim who in turn passed to Bo who swung wide about left end. Ludlow, massed to stop Garrett's fullback, was caught off guard and Bo, with only ten yards to go, slipped over the goal line.

"That's just what he did in the Parnell game!" cried a Garrett fan. "Made Russ do the dirty work, then sent himself over for the touchdown! He likes to attend to the scoring personally . . . but we should worry—just so the scoring's done!"

Taking his time, Captain Russ Willard made sure of the point after touchdown and the score-board read: Ludlow, 13; Garrett, 7.

"Jim, ask Russ how he's feeling," requested Bo of his former buddy.

"What for?" demanded Jim.

"Because I don't think he's made up for his fumble yet," was Bo's answer. "I've got some more work cut out for him!"

Ludlow's quarterback once more caught the ball on the kick-off but his luck seemed to have deserted him for blue jerseys of Garrett assailed him from seemingly every direction and he was downed before he had run the ball back ten yards. The Ludlow team, however, commenced a slow but steady advance and the third quarter ended with Ludlow gaining another first down on Garrett's forty yard mark.

"They've gone far enough!" declared Captain Russ. "Get in there you linesmen! What are you good for? Force 'em to punt!"

Bo Hardy ran along the line, prodding each man, and tired forms dug cleats into the dirt with new determination. Garrett was fighting now; the old courage was flaming. Garrett had lost its awe of the enemy. Ludlow hadn't been able to produce another "break" or phenomenal play this half! Garrett's star, how-

ever, was in the ascendancy. Garrett was going places even though Ludlow was stubbornly delaying her.

The home crowd shrieked with joy as Garrett braced to hold Ludlow to three yards in three downs. It shrieked some more as Ludlow's brilliant quarterback, minus some of his earlier lustre, was forced to call the old familiar, "Punt formation!" Russ caught the punt and came back with it fifteen yards to Garrett's thirty-four yard mark.

"All right, you guys!" rasped Quarterback Bo Hardy. "Let's see what stuff you're made of! We're not going to let loose of this ball until we've carried it over Ludlow's goal line!"

"You said it!" was the spirited response.

And then began a sustained attack, the likes of which Garrett had not exhibited all season. Nothing Ludlow could do seemed capable of stopping it. Again it was Captain Russ Willard who did the lion's share of the ball-carrying. But his stamina was slowly failing him and Quarterback Bo Hardy, a driving dynamo behind the line, at last broke his rule of silence by addressing him directly.

"It was easy enough to fumble and lose us the Parnell game, wasn't it?" he razzed, unmercifully. "What are you going to do—lay down on us now—just when we need you most? Get in there! Let's see something!"

"I'll show you something!" Russ would retort, and call upon some new reserve.

Bo varied the attack with an occasional end run or lateral pass or criss-cross . . . but, for the most part, he relied on a power drive. With five minutes of the last quarter remaining, Captain Russ Willard stumbled through a hole made for him by a Trot Kimball who had done herculean work at left guard, and was thrown heavily on Ludlow's nine yard line.

"First down for Garrett!" announced the referee. "Goal to go!"

"Goal to go!" repeated Quarterback Bo Hardy, hauling a dazed Russ to his feet. "Did you hear that, old timer? 'Goal to go'!"

"Goal to go!" muttered Russ, as Bo shoved him back into position. "Gimme the ball!"

"Now look out for a trick play!" warned a wise Garrett fan. "It's time that Bo took the ball himself!"

But Bo gave the ball to Jim instead. Ludlow rose up, however, and hurled him back for a loss of a yard.

"Take it yourself!" pleaded Jim.

"No!" hissed Bo in his ear. "I'm giving it to Russ. He's earned the right to take this pig-skin across! I couldn't rob him of this touch-down!"

"Rob him?" gasped Jim, staring hard at Bo.

"That's the way I'd feel about it," was Bo's answer.

"But Russ is practically all in!" cried Jim.
"He may not be able to make it!"

"We've got to help him make it!" exploded Bo. "Any man who's brought us this far! We ought to be able to carry him ten yards!"

Garrett team members, hearing the signal, girded themselves for the final push. Second down—ten yards to go. The Ludlow line broke apart and Captain Russ Willard went reeling through. He was hit hard at the three yard line and was lifted to his feet by a solicitous Bo Hardy and a mightily concerned Jim Morrison.

"He hasn't got another plunge in him!" was Jim's verdict.

"He's going over this next time!" declared Bo, "and no one's going to lay a hand on him. Trot, old man, it's up to you! This is the last hole I'm going to ask you to open!"

"Thank the Gods for that!" breathed Trot, and crouched in his place on the line for a final effort.

"Now, listen, Russ!" Bo directed, as Garrett's captain swayed in his position, looking confused. "You're going to make up for your fumble next play, understand? You're going to win this game! You're going through for a touchdown!"

"Touchdown?" murmured Russ, vaguely. "Just gimme the ball! . . . Touchdown!"

With spectators wildly excited, the ball snapped back. Quarterback Bo Hardy personally saw to it that Captain Russ Willard found the hole Trot opened for him. He followed his captain through this hole as it closed in on him, and went down in the heap which buried them both . . . but he could tell, even before willing hands reached down and untangled him from the pile, that Garrett's fullback had completed his day's work. Captain Russ Willard had

scored after as great a display of sheer power as had ever been seen on Garrett field. His touchdown had tied the score and now time was taken out as he stretched, quite exhausted, on the cold and matted grass beyond the last boundary line.

"Buck up, Russ—you've got to kick the goal!" Bo cried, kneeling by his side.

"He can't kick goal!" protested Jim. "It's taking too big a chance! We've got this game sewed up if . . . !"

"You do the kicking!" begged Ping Eller.

"It's up to the captain," was Bo's comment. "He's been doing all the kicking. He deserves the honor of . . . !"

Honor! Team members glanced at Bo queerly. Why was a fellow talking about honor at a time like this? Garrett's quarterback would hardly have known himself, except that individual honor suddenly seemed to mean nothing to him. In its place was a desire to see others get credit where credit seemed due. And Captain Russ Willard had pulled a lost cause out of the fire almost single-handed. If he was equal to it, he should try for the extra point.

"Okay now?" Bo asked, as Russ, after washing his mouth out, arose to his feet and looked around.

"Okay!" Russ answered, and grinned crookedly.

"Then kick that old ball between the goal posts and let's call it an afternoon!" said Bo.

Russ nodded. He was still a bit shaky as he lined up with the team . . . but his shakiness left him as the ball came skimming back, a perfect pass from center. Garrett's line held fast to enable Russ to get his kick off, unhurried. And, with the pigskin's sailing over the uprights, the Garrett stands went stark-staring mad! It was later said that the yells were heard twenty miles away in the next county. But all the noise was simply caused by the changed appearance of the scoreboard which now read:

GARRETT 14

LUDLOW 13

"Russ, you old warhorse!" Bo cried, and slapped his captain on the back. But two minutes of time remained and Garrett had no

intention, this occasion, of letting the game slip through her fingers. She kicked off to Ludlow and the ball was downed on Ludlow's thirty-three yard line.

"Look out for passes!" Garrett supporters warned.

Three quick passes were tried, Ludlow accepting the two five yard penalties which resulted when the passes proved incomplete. Ludlow's quarterback then dropped back for what appeared to be a punt.

"It's a trick play!" guessed an anxious Garrett rooter. "They won't kick so near the end of the game!"

But, in this, the guesser was wrong because Ludlow's quarterback did kick, a long spiraling punt which Quarterback Bo Hardy saw was going to clear his head. He turned his back and raced after it, then turned again and reached up. The pigskin bounced in his arms and out.

"A fumble!" shrieked the stands.

Ludlow team members, following down desperately after the punt, now put on extra speed in a frenzied effort to reach the free ball.

Two of them dived for it, clutched it between them and rolled over and over with Quarterback Bo Hardy falling atop them on Garrett's twenty-seven yard mark.

"I'm sorry, gang!" Bo apologized as the teams lined up with Ludlow in possession of the ball.

"What diff does it make?" soothed Jim, "Ludlow's only got time for one more play!"

But the Ludlow quarterback, who had been quite thoroughly squelched this last half, was excitedly calling his men back for a huddle. Timers got their heads together on the sidelines and consulted watches.

"Look out! Ludlow's got one last trick up their sleeves!" warned the Garrett stands.

The Ludlow players came out of their huddle. As they did so the crowd exclaimed in breathless surprise: "They're going to try for a field goal!"

"That's right!" considered a Garrett rooter, nervously, "a field goal could win for them—sixteen to fourteen! Oh, boy! . . . Break that up, Garrett! . . . There must be only seconds to play! Why don't they call time?"

Ludlow's quarterback wasted not a second calling signals. His team was scarcely lined up than he snapped his fingers and the ball came back. He caught it deftly and dropped it toward his upswinging toe. As he kicked, the timer's gun banged, ending the game. Every eye on the gridiron and in the packed stands watched the flight of the pigskin upon which the whole fate of the great battle depended. A deathly stillness gripped the stadium for an agonizing moment. Then Ludlow fans suddenly lost their reason. Their amazing little quarterback had produced in the pinch. His dropkick from the thirty-seven yard mark had just cleared the bar . . . and Garrett High had lost her second big game in the last minute of play! Both defeats, ironically enough, being directly traceable to unfortunate fumbles . . . the fumble in the Parnell game by Russ giving Parnell the necessary touchdown to win . . . and the fumble in this Ludlow contest by Bo, giving Ludlow the necessary opportunity to recapture the ball and kick the field goal!

"It's all my fault!" sobbed a broken-hearted Bo Hardy. "I spoiled the greatest game we

ever played! And after Russ making up for his fumble, too! To think of the way I bawled him out! A lot *I've* got to say!"

Jim Morrison led him off the field, a disconsolate figure. In the locker room, brought face to face with the fellow who had been elected captain in place of him, Bo raised his chin, defiantly.

"All right," he said, invitingly. "Tell me what you think of me, Russ! I didn't spare you last game! And I'm not expecting to be spared now!"

"I'm not going to spare you!" promised Russ, as team members crowded around. "I know just how you feel, old man. There's nothing any of us can do about it . . . it was just in the cards, I guess. But I just want to say that I'm proud to have gone down to defeat with a fellow who wouldn't give up, who didn't know what it meant to quit and who wouldn't let any of us quit. That counts with me more than winning—because it's often lots easier to win—than to lose!"

Bo Hardy's eyes suddenly blurred. He rubbed them vigorously, then ventured a look

around to see the whole squad eyeing him, warmly. And it seemed to him, then, his ever having wanted to be captain had paled into insignificance.

"Oh, say!" he suddenly exclaimed, a bit embarrassed at the regard which was being shown for him. "I hope you guys will excuse me. I've got to write my uncle. You see, I've let him think I was captain . . . and I want to tell him now what a swell game the guy played who really *was* captain!"

Bo's Uncle Fred not only forgave him when he had been informed of the whole story, but presented Garrett High's quarterback with the Christmas present of a college education at Templeton. No gift could have brought more joy to a youth, for Templeton was rated as one of the finest universities in that section of the country.

"Sorry you fellows won't be there with me," Bo told Captain Russ Willard and Jim. "It won't seem natural without you guys around."

"That's the one college I'd like to go to," Russ admitted, "but my folks just can't afford to send me."

"Nor me," added Jim, regretfully. "I sure wish I had a rich uncle!"

Bo, in enthusing over his own good fortune, suddenly realized that he was making Russ and Jim feel badly. Now that he'd grown to appreciate them so very much, it seemed a shame to be without their association, particularly when they, too, desired to attend Templeton. Bo felt a wave of gratitude go out to his two team-mates as he reviewed his sport life at Garrett, sensing what they had done for him. They'd taught him a few lessons that hadn't been contained in the textbooks . . . lessons he'd needed to learn before hitting Templeton . . . the shelving of his attitude of self-importance, for instance . . . let the other guys make a fuss over their accomplishments; he would stick to "sawing wood," doing his stuff for the inner satisfaction it gave him.

"Cheer up, fellows!" he said. "Maybe something will happen before next fall rolls around that'll give you a chance to go to Templeton, too!"

"Yes," grinned Jim. "And maybe it'll snow, like it's doing now, in mid-July!"

"Speaking of snow!" broke in Bo. "It's great weather right now for a little hunting trip. What do you say we go on an all-day hike Saturday. There ought to be some rabbit tracks around Lake Merlin . . ."

"Swell!" approved Russ.

And, with the arrival of Saturday, the three chums set out for Lakeside Resort, three miles from Garrett—a resort which, in winter time, was almost deserted except for occasional groups of men who used their summer cottages for hunting lodges. The country round about was wild and interesting. Russ had volunteered as the hunting dog, although he had given no assurance of his ability to run the rabbit down. "I'll simply scare 'em out of their holes," he said. "You fellows'll have to hit 'em as they skip across country!" Bo's rifle was the only weapon, one which was to be passed around.

It was snowing as the trio set out and the fall became heavier as they reached the resort locality.

"Swell weather you picked," grumbled Russ, as the three struck the old logging road descending to the shores of Lake Merlin. "You want

to get us caught out in a blizzard, don't you?"

"Why not?" grinned Bo, rifle resting easily in his arm. "I'd like to get caught in something—a little excitement would do me good! Haven't had any since our last big game . . .!"

Jim, blowing on blue hands, glanced side-wise at Bo. "Still after thrills!" he joshed. "Suppose you'd like to be playing football the year around! Be a good thing if you could forget it off seasons. Just to set you straight, we're rabbit hunting. If you're looking for pigskins, you won't see any running loose out here!"

Bo stopped short and stared suddenly ahead.

"No, but I see something else," he said, and pointed to a parked sedan in a little clearing, surrounded by dense forest.

"What do you know?" exclaimed Russ. "Funny place for a car, isn't it? Wonder how long it's been here?"

"Not very long," observed Bo. "Tracks still show. It was driven up the logging road from the other direction—from the resort highway. . . . And—look—there's a man asleep in the rear seat!"

Jim and Russ gasped their astonishment.

The three strode up to within half a dozen feet of the car.

"I can't imagine a man taking a snooze in a car in an out of the way place like this—this time of year!" said Bo, as the figure stretched out on the back seat, did not move.

"He must be drunk!" surmised Russ.
"Come on—this is none of our business."

"Maybe not," said Bo, slowly. "But we'd better keep our eye on this car . . . come back through this way. A guy could freeze to death if he stays too long out here."

"He'll probably be gone by the time we come back," declared Jim. "Let's keep on traveling. It's cold standing!"

The three moved on, Bo giving anxious backward glances at the sedan.

"I don't feel right about that," he said. "I'll be worrying about that bird till I find he's pulled out."

"Hey—a rabbit!" shouted Russ, and pointed excitedly into a thicket.

But before Bo could get the rifle to his shoulder the bunch of fur disappeared.

"What good does it do you to have a dog

along?" demanded Russ. "You'll have to let your dog do the shooting, too!"

"My turn next!" claimed Jim, and took the rifle from Bo who stopped to give one last look back at the car. "Bo, you're no good when you get anything on your mind."

"Just the same," decided Bo, "We're swinging back through this way in a couple of hours!"

Rabbits proved few and far between and exceedingly elusive when they *were* seen. Hitting them with a rifle was a trick in itself. Russ it was who asserted that the rabbits couldn't say they had not been given a sporting chance. Jim declared, after much tramping, that the rabbits could have stood still and not been hit, had they only known it. Bo was of the opinion that the rabbits were in greater danger of being hit if they ran—facing the hazzard of running into stray bullets. Then, too, the snow which had now assumed blizzard proportions, made visibility difficult. After slightly more than two hours, the three chums were agreed that rabbit hunting for the day was useless. Retracing their footsteps they again reached the old logging road and headed toward the clearing.

"What'll you bet the car's gone?" asked Russ.

"But it's *not!*!" cried Bo, as they cut into the clearing.

"Say!" breathed Jim, "if that bird's still asleep we'd better wake him up. I never thought . . .!"

Moving toward the car in a group, all three glanced in the rear window. They beheld the form of a man, lying on his side, his face shielded by a soft felt hat which he had apparently placed over it. He was attired in a dark winter overcoat, the collar of which was turned up about his neck.

"I don't see any liquor in the car," observed Bo, mounting the running board which creaked under his weight. "Of course he may have a bottle in his pocket."

"Open the door!" urged Russ. "I'll grab his foot and see if I can rouse him."

Bo grasped the handle to the rear door. As the door yielded, a fringe of snow along the window frame slid off.

"Say!" said Jim. "That man's been asleep at least four hours! It's been snowing just about that long and there's the same amount of snow

on all the doors. If any of 'em had been opened in that time . . .!"

"You're right!" agreed Russ, reaching in to grasp the foot which he gave a sudden yank. "Hey, Mister! . . . Oh, my gosh! . . . Fellows—his leg's *stiff!*!"

"What?"

Russ dropped the leg and drew back, aghast.

"You don't mean he's . . .?"

"I think he is!" said Russ. "If I just had the nerve to take that hat off his face!"

"I'll do it!" Bo volunteered. "Say, if this guy's croaked—we're boobs for not investigating when we first came by here . . .!"

Bo leaned in the sedan and took hold the hat, lifting it from the face. As he did so, Jim and Russ gasped. "He's been shot!"

A splotch of blood marked a bullet hole at the right temple.

"Yes—and here's a revolver beside him on the back seat," discovered Bo.

As he started to pick the weapon up, Russ caught his arm. "Wait a minute! We'd better leave things as they are. This is a job for the coroner!"

"Well, it's easy to see what happened here," said Bo. "Plain suicide. Well dressed man, though. He . . .!"

"Hold on!" cried Jim, excitedly. "Let me get a good look at the face. Why, fellows—don't you recognize who this is . . .?"

Bo and Russ stared.

"For Pete's sake!"

"It's Banker Edgar Franklin!" Jack identified. "Gee! This'll be a sensation! Why—it was only last week he gave our school a donation toward the new gymnasium! . . . Can you picture his doing a thing like . . .?"

"Where's the nearest telephone?" broke in Russ.

"Search me. Plenty of lines out this way but probably all disconnected for the winter. Best thing for us to do is hit it for town. We can pick up a ride once we reach the main highway."

"One of us ought to stay here until we can get the police," declared Russ. "How about you, Bo? You mind?"

"Okay!" Bo agreed, after a moment's hesitation. "I'll climb into the front seat and get

out of the wind and snow. It'll be dark in a couple more hours so you guys make it snappy!"

"Boy, I'm glad Bo's willing to stay," shuddered Jim. "I wouldn't do that for a million dollars."

"Shucks—this isn't anything!" rejoined Bo. "I'll be glad of the chance to sit here and . . . hello! What's this?"

On getting into the front seat, Bo came across a slip of paper. He picked it up and scrutinized it, frowning deeply.

"What do you make of it?" he asked of Russ, handing the paper over. "Nothing on it but figures . . ."

Jim glanced over Russ' shoulder as the two examined the paper. What they saw was:

B 5 2 4 3 6 8 1 7 9 A A

B 5 2 4 3 6 8 1 8 6 A A

B 5 2 4 3 6 8 1 9 3 A A

"These are serial numbers to bills of some denomination," divined Russ. "Probably doesn't mean much . . . I wonder if the bank's in good shape? . . ."

"Maybe not," said Jim soberly, "I guess all Garrett will be hit, if it is, seeing as how the Peoples is the only bank in town . . .!"

"He wouldn't commit suicide over nothing," declared Bo. "That's a cinch. Something pretty terrible's happened to make him do it, you can bet on that!"

"Well, it's going to be some shock to the town," rejoined Russ. "Gee—I can hardly believe it! There wasn't a more popular, more respected man in Garrett."

"I wish we could really look into this," said Bo, settling himself in the car. "Mr. Franklin may have left some farewell notes in his pockets, explaining everything."

"He may," acceded Russ, "but that's none of our business. Our duty is to notify the authorities and watch over his body until help comes."

"Then—beat it, you guys!" urged Bo, "Are you hanging onto that piece of paper, Russ? It may not mean much but I suppose it ought to be turned over . . ."

"Oh, sure!" said Russ. "You really don't mind us leaving you here alone?"

Bo gave a glance at the form on the rear seat. He had replaced the hat over the face as it had been when the body was found.

"I'll stick it out," he assured. "I'm not saying what I'll do if you're not back before it gets dark. I've no hankering to be in this woods at night with . . . !"

"We'll be back inside an hour!" Russ promised, moving off in company with Jim.

Bo watched his two chums out of sight. His staying behind with the corpse of what had so shortly been Garrett's most distinguished citizen had seemed, at the moment, a small matter. But as the minutes dragged on and the wind moaned in the trees and snow blotted out the horizon, Bo became increasingly impressed so that an inner chill was added to the chill without.

"It's a real blizzard now!" Bo observed. "I hope Jim and Russ reached the main highway. It'll be dark earlier than usual tonight and I'd be foolish to try to go far in this storm the way she's blowing up!"

Each sound became magnified. As the car snapped or snow slid suddenly down a window, Bo started. A wall of white appeared to be

burying him in a glass-enclosed tomb. It hadn't been so bad when he could see out but now that his vision was confined largely to the scene within the car, his usual steady nerves commenced to waver.

"And me wishing for some real excitement awhile ago," groaned Bo. "Well—if this is a sample of it, I've had plenty!"

Garrett had always been noted as the quietest town on the shores of Lake Merlin despite the fact that it was only some seventy miles from the automobile center of the universe—Detroit. Inhabitants of Garrett had been prone to boast of their four-men police force and the law and order which prevailed. Why there hadn't been a murder in Garrett since the oldest citizen could remember and as for robberies—well, of course there'd been a little sneak thievery but the crooks were looking for bigger pickings these days. Bo recalled, with a gasp, having heard Mr. Franklin give a public address not more than two months ago when the now dead banker had declared: "We have a right to be proud of our town. During this apparent wave of crime and lawlessness, the residents of Garrett are living

in peace and security. Every person knows everybody else and our community is small enough so that a stranger cannot remain a stranger long. In this manner, any possible undesirable citizens are weeded out and made to understand that they are not welcome here . . .!"

"It just goes to show you never can tell," Bo mused. "I don't suppose Mr. Franklin realized when he said that conditions were going to get so bad he'd be driven to kill himself!"

At the end of half an hour Bo was fighting a desire to get out of the car and strike out for home. He knew the layout of the whole countryside. He could find his way somehow, despite the wall of snow. Almost anything was better than staying on. And then, as he was about to open the car door, Bo heard voices. The windows were glazed over so that he could not see out. His first impulse was to open the door and greet whoever it might be. If Jim and Russ had brought the police this quickly, they had done exceedingly well. But Bo stiffened with interest at an overheard remark.

"I thought you'd gotten that paper. It must be somewhere in the car."

What could a declaration like this mean? Hazily, Bo saw the figure of three men loom up out of the snow from behind the car. Could these men have been here before? And what paper were they referring to? Instead of opening the door, Bo laid down upon the front seat. The death of Bunker Edgar Franklin began to assume the aspects of a mystery. Perhaps it had not been a *plain* suicide after all. . . !

"This snow will cover up any tracks," a voice was saying. "That's why it's perfectly safe for us to come back . . . and that paper is important."

There was the sound of the rear side door opening and Bo, heart suddenly pounding, pressed himself against the seat, hoping that his presence would not be discovered.

"Everything just as we left it," said a third voice. "I don't see anything here."

"Better look in front, too," said the first voice. "Take no chances."

The handle of the door turned and snow came swirling in as Bo, realizing he would be detected, sat upright. The man who looked in recoiled in astonishment. He carried a shotgun with which he quickly covered Bo.

"Hello, boy! What you doing here?"

There were exclamations of surprise from the other two men and the door on the other side was wrenched open as a second man looked in. All three were attired in mackinaw coats and high-topped shoes with heavy woolen hunting caps. Bo had a hazy recollection of having seen them before; perhaps on Garrett's main street. If he remembered correctly, they were supposed to be business men from Detroit and Chicago who owned a cottage and dropped in on Lakeside Resort at odd times and seasons for hunting and fishing. They were apparently well to do and, if these were the men, they boasted a high-powered car which had been quite the envy of townsfolk. But now their actions were definitely suspicious and what was he to do about it? Bo, speechless with fear and bewilderment, could only stare.

"I said—what are you doing here?" the tall man repeated. "Sitting in that car—with a dead man?"

Bo's mind began to operate. The men must be thinking that he had overheard their remarks. They hadn't acted shocked at the sight of the

body but they *had* acted disturbed at finding him. Each of them was armed with a shotgun. Under the circumstances there was only one thing for Bo to do.

"What's that?" he asked, cupping a hand to his ear and regarding his questioner, dumbly.

Bo fancied the man looked relieved. "The kid's deaf," he heard him say in an undertone and the other two men nodded. The tall man lowered his gun. Leaning forward, he shouted: "You look cold. How long you been sitting here?"

"What?" queried Bo.

"I say—how did this happen?" demanded the interrogator, with a satisfied glance at his companions.

"Oh!" said Bo, taking on a look of comprehension. "I dunno. You see—Jim and Russ and me came across the car about three hours ago. We thought the man was asleep . . . maybe intoxicated . . . but on the way back we looked in and saw he was dead. Jim and Russ went for help and I stayed here to look after things."

"Brave boy!" commended the second man, a short thickset person.

"How's that?" asked Bo.

"You know the man?" was the next question.

"Oh! Yes, sir. It's Mr. Edgar Franklin, president of the Peoples' Bank!"

"No!" exclaimed the tall man, apparently surprised. "Why, I knew Mr. Franklin!"

"So that's who it is!" exclaimed the third, lifting the hat off the face.

"Better not touch the body," advised Bo. "No one's supposed to do that but the coroner."

"That's right, Jake," said the tall man, with an annoyed gesture. "Put the hat back."

Bo fancied that the tall man did not relish looking upon the corpse. That these men knew something of Mr. Franklin's death was evident. The storm was growing worse. Bo wondered if Jim and Russ would be able to follow the old logging road which led past the Lakeside Resort into the forest. He also wondered what might happen to him if the men sensed that he had heard their conversation about the paper.

"Hey, kid!" The tall man reached in to grab him by the elbow. Pulling Bo over so that he could place his mouth close to his ear, he shouted: "This is no place for you. We've

got a cottage half a mile from here. Jake will take you to the house where you can get thawed out and we'll stand by till the police arrive."

"No, thanks," declined Bo. "I promised Jim and Russ I'd stick here."

"Get him out of the car so we can look around," said the short, thickset man in a low voice. "I'd have sworn I had that paper. If it's not in the car we've nothing to worry about . . . it's probably been lost somewhere in the snow . . ."

"Don't you want to stretch your legs?" belied the tall man.

"What did you say?" Bo wanted to know.

The tall man repeated his invitation but Bo shook his head.

"No, thanks. I'm very comfortable. Do a couple of you want to squeeze in here with me? I know it's not very pleasant out there."

"Go ahead, Jake. You too, Mickie," ordered the tall man.

After an exchange of glances the two men referred to, slid into the front seat alongside Bo. They had hardly gotten seated than they commenced looking about. Bo studied their actions

with a dumb expression on his face. If they thought he was a bit stupid as well as deaf, so much the better.

"See anything?" said the tall man, leaning in the doorway. His tone of voice was pitched low.

"No—I was certain it wasn't here," replied the short thickset man, guardedly. "We're okay. All we gotta do is sit tight."

Bo, though he heard perfectly, stared blankly ahead. What was he going to do when Jim and Russ should come back? How could he tip them off to his supposed deafness? These men looked innocent enough under ordinary circumstances but they might easily be desperadoes of the worst type. If they were actually the killers of Bunker Edgar Franklin they would probably stop at nothing. Bo felt a tingling sensation at the roots of his hair. Weren't Jim and Russ about due back?

The far-off sound of a motor came to Bo's ears. He stiffened instinctively and recalled just in time that he was supposed not to have heard it. But the men were aroused at once.

"What's the matter?" Bo asked.

"An automobile!" shouted the tall man.
"Sounds like help's coming!"

"About time," said Bo, and waited, eagerly.

The wind had begun to pile the snow. Bo reflected, as he listened to the labored sound of the approaching car, that a little while more and it might be a difficult task getting Mr. Franklin's machine back to town. The logging road was rough and bumpy. Shouts came to his ears which he pretended not to hear though he recognized both Jim's and Russ' voices.

"They'll think it's funny I'm not answering them," Bo thought. "But it might be as much as my life is worth to do it!"

When Jim and Russ finally appeared, snow-covered, leading Sheriff Blake, Coroner Milliken and two police officers who constituted half of Garrett's police force, both chums were peeved.

"Why didn't you holler back?" Jim demanded, "We got off the road and . . .!"

"What?" Bo cut in.

Jim stared.

"I said," he started again, but stopped as he caught a quick, guarded glance from Bo.

"Hello, Sheriff!" addressed the tall man, stepping forward.

"Well, Tomlinson!" greeted Sheriff Blake. "Did the boy bring you over?"

"No. We were returning to the cottage from a little hunting trip," the tall man replied as his two companions sauntered over beside him. "Got turned around in the storm and ran across the car. Found the boy sitting in it. Pretty game kid."

"Yes," nodded the sheriff with a grim glance at Bo. "Bet you were glad to see 'em, eh?"

"How's that?" asked Bo.

Sheriff Blake gave vent to a dry laugh. "Huh! He's still scared stiff!"

Coroner Milliken opened the rear door of the car and, together with Sheriff Blake, examined the body. Bo, meanwhile, bowing his head into the storm, joined Jim and Russ. The three stood not far from the group of hunters who had engaged the two policemen in conversation.

"Speak loud to me, you guys!" Bo warned. "They think I'm deaf!"

"Did you think we were long in coming?"

"Long enough!" said Bo. He could feel the men sizing him up. "Have any trouble?"

"Not after we hit the main highway!" replied Russ in a loud voice. "We stopped a car and begged a ride to the nearest phone . . . then we waited till the Sheriff came out and picked us up." Then, in a carefully guarded undertone: "What the dickens is up?"

"Don't dare tell you now," Bo managed, indicating the three men with his eyes.

The tall man named Tomlinson jabbed his thumb at the youthful trio and moved over with the policemen.

"The officers want to know if you left everything just as you found it," he said.

"Yes, I told Sheriff Blake on the way out," rejoined Russ.

"Well, Mr. Tomlinson just brought the point up," said the first policeman. "He was saying some times kids didn't know enough to leave things alone and . . . !"

"What's that?" broke in Bo.

"Oh, Russ's got a slip of paper that we found in the car. But that's all," Jim volunteered. "We didn't touch the . . . that is . . . !"

Bo was nudging his arm. What was the matter with Jim? Hadn't it dawned on him that these men could not be trusted? Of course Jim had answered one of the policemen. Perhaps he thought this was different.

"Paper?" Mr. Tomlinson took up. "Let's see it, boy, will you?"

Bo bit his lips. The conversation was not loud enough for him to have heard in his pretended deafness. He even feared that he had been detected signalling Jim to "pipe down." And now he should find some way of warning Russ not to. . . . ! But Russ was already reaching in his pocket.

"Why, the paper really doesn't amount to anything," he was saying. "Just some serial numbers to bills like any banker might be carrying around in his pocket, I suppose. I was going to hand this to the Sheriff but I clean forgot . . . !"

Mr. Tomlinson reached over suddenly and took the paper from Russ who looked at him surprised.

"I'll see that the Sheriff gets it," was the explanation offered. Then, turning to the police-

men, Mr. Tomlinson remarked: "You see, it's just as I told you. Can't trust kids."

"Hey! Wait a minute!" called Russ, starting after the tall man who had turned and strode toward the car.

"Not so fast, son!" spoke a policeman, stopping Russ. "We'll handle this. You boys did your part reporting it."

"You get that paper back!" Bo urged in an undertone. "It's important! . . . What's the matter with you guys? Didn't you tumble . . . ?"

"I don't 'get' you?" said Jim, puzzled. "What *is* this?"

"I can't hear you," complained Bo as he saw Mr. Tomlinson's companions eyeing him.

Jim at least knew enough not to repeat the question in a loud voice. He simply looked his curiosity as did Russ.

Bo, keeping watch, saw Mr. Tomlinson speak a few words to Coroner Milliken and Sheriff Blake, then motion to his companions to join the group. After five minutes the men apparently arrived at a conclusion. The minutes were long ones because Bo found himself unable to com-

municate with Jim and Russ due to the presence of the policemen.

"It's plainly evident," Coroner Milliken announced, "that Edgar Franklin took his life by his own hand."

"Ask the Sheriff if Mr. Tomlinson turned over that paper to him," Bo demanded of Russ.

With the question repeated and addressed to the Sheriff, it was Mr. Tomlinson who replied. "Yes, and the Sheriff agreed it was immaterial. Nothing but a piece of scrap paper. Good idea though, for you boys to keep it till you knew its possible value."

There was a patronizing air about the answer that Bo didn't like. Sheriff Blake, however, seemed impressed. He and Tomlinson evidently considered each other pretty good friends. The Sheriff also appeared on cordial terms with the two companions whom the boys came to know as Jake Ralston and Mickie Farnsworth. Whatever any of the three said apparently carried great weight with him.

"First chance I get," Bo vowed, "I'm going to tell the Sheriff what I know."

The time wasn't right now. Everyone was

anxious to get in out of the storm. Mr. Tomlinson was even volunteering to drive the dead man's car into town. Sheriff Blake accepted the offer and Mr. Franklin's body was stretched out on the back seat, being covered with a car robe. The Coroner got in beside it as the Sheriff took his seat beside the driver, motioning to the boys to go back in his car with the policemen. There was trouble in starting the cold motor of the Franklin machine but it finally responded. More trouble as the car was turned about in the snow. Ralston and Farnsworth insisted that they could find their way back to their cottage without assistance. They would get their own car and drive in town after Tomlinson. With all arrangements made, the boys climbed in the back seat of Sheriff Blake's machine. They had scarcely seated themselves than Bo let loose.

"You birds certainly are prize dumb-bells!" he denounced.

"All right—if you're so wise!" snapped Jim.
"Let's hear why!"

And Bo told exactly why, ending up with:
"So that's why I say—Mr. Franklin didn't commit suicide. He was murdered!"

"What's that you said?" sounded a voice just outside the car window.

Farnsworth, the short thickset man suddenly appeared and looked in. The death car had been driven off down the road. Policeman Hadley was now trying to start the motor of the Sheriff's car. Bo looked at his questioner startled. He had thought himself perfectly safe. How Farnsworth had gotten behind the car so quickly and managed to eavesdrop was a mystery . . . but he had done it and now his face looked ugly, menacing.

"I—I didn't say anything!" Bo replied, in alarm.

"No?" was the retort. "And you're not so hard of hearing, either, are you?"

"Now who's a dumb-bell!?" demanded Russ, as the policeman finally started the motor, cussing at the cold and snow.

Bo could not answer. Instead he stared out the window in almost petrified silence as he saw Ralston step out from behind the car, taking a stand alongside Farnsworth.

"You'd better be careful what you say," Farnsworth warned, opening the rear door a slit

to shoot these words in. "It don't pay for kids to let their imaginations run wild. You try that—and there's danger ahead . . .!"

The car was off, swirling snow from under the wheels. Farnsworth and Ralston were left as though they were stranded. Jim and Russ bumped up and down for a moment, unspeaking.

Bo's lips moved. "Danger ahead!" he repeated. "Well, I don't care if there is. I'm going to tell my story to Sheriff Blake. These men aren't such good guys as they'd like to make out! I played deaf all right but I turned out dumb, too . . . I never should have made that slip—but, then—I haven't had so much practice as a detective . . ."

"None of us has," consoled Russ, "but we're with you, Bo! Mr. Franklin was a swell person. It would be terrible for his family to think he'd committed suicide when he really hadn't. If you think he didn't—we'll try to help you prove it!"

News of Banker Edgar Franklin's death by suicide caused a panic among the good people of Garrett. The fact that it was late Saturday

afternoon when the facts were made known did not help matters since the bank was closed for the week-end and frenzied depositors commenced setting up a clamor for their money. When a man of the character and standing of Mr. Franklin was driven to take his life, there was only one conclusion to draw. Conditions at the bank must be terribly unstable. Wild rumors flew about town, growing wilder by the minute. A disturbed and murmuring crowd gathered in front of the morgue demanding to know inside information of the two policemen who stood guard. But the officers were close-mouthed, revealing only the story of the finding of Edgar Franklin's body by the three well known high school boys and the three winter campers who had been staying at Mr. Tomlinson's cottage.

"He shot himself with his own revolver," said Policeman Hadley. "Oh, sure—he had a permit to carry a gun. No—they haven't found anything irregular at the bank. They've started going over the books now. Don't get excited. I had money in that bank, too. Let's wait till we know what's what."

Inside the undertaking parlors, Sheriff Blake, Coroner Milliken, the boys and Mr. Tomlinson were gathered. Mr. Franklin's effects had been gone over carefully and no clue found as to the taking of his life. Henry Strickland, vice-president of the Peoples Bank, situated not quite a block down the street, declared: "Mr. Franklin stopped by my desk about a quarter to twelve. He told me to close up, that he was going out on a little errand. He did seem a bit concerned about something, now that I think of it, but what was on his mind I have no way of knowing. I saw him go out and get into his car. The weather was threatening snow. He went off in the direction of the Lakeside Resort. That was the last I saw of him."

"He probably went out that way because he knew the resort was practically deserted," deduced Sheriff Blake.

"Mr. Tomlinson is the only one out in his cottage now, isn't he?" asked Bo.

Jim and Russ looked at their chum uneasily. Bo had already incurred the enmity of Mr. Tomlinson's two associates and now Mr. Tomlinson was glowering at him. It was all over

that piece of paper and the apparent interest of these men in it. From what Bo had said he overheard before the men knew he was in the car, there was something strange about it . . . but Bo wasn't being tactful at all, speaking up like he was.

"Yes, I guess you are the only resident at present," said Sheriff Blake, jovially. "You sure must like this country, Tomlinson, coming back these odd seasons of the year."

"I like the hunting," said the tall man whose business address was Chicago. "Ralston and Farnsworth like it, too. We get up as often as we can."

"Don't blame you," said the Sheriff. "This is great resort country—winter or summer. I've often told our mayor—we should boom our winter resort business more . . . the summer resort business takes care of itself."

"I was just wondering," ventured Bo, slowly, "if Mr. Franklin should have been calling on anyone, whether he might have been headed for Mr. Tominson's . . . ?"

"See here, you fellows," interrupted the Sheriff, impatiently. "We don't need any help

in solving this case. There's no mystery about it. No use of your hanging around any longer."

"Oh yes, there is!" Bo insisted. He looked about to be sure that he had the support of Jim and Russ. They nodded, resolutely. "There's something I haven't told you, Sheriff," Bo continued as Tomlinson irritatedly lighted a cigar. "But while I was sitting in the car, waiting for help to come, I heard voices. I heard men talking about a piece of paper . . . heard one of them say it must be somewhere in the car. Then Mr. Tomlinson and his two friends came up out of the storm and opened the door and found me."

Sheriff Blake and Coroner Milliken turned to Mr. Tomlinson in surprise. Tomlinson was staring hard at Punk.

"I pretended that I was deaf when I realized that I'd overheard something that might be important and they seemed relieved. They looked about in the car but didn't find anything. Then, when Jim and Russ got back and we were talking to the policemen, Russ produced the piece of paper we'd found and Mr. Tomlinson took it from him."

"He gave it to me," said the Sheriff, fumbling in his pocket. "You're trying to make a mountain out of a molehill, son. You must have been dreaming. What could Mr. Tomlinson and his friends possibly want with this?"

Taking out a slip of paper, the sheriff exhibited it not only to the boys but to vice-president Strickland. As the chums saw the paper, they gasped. It had a jumble of figures on it.

"Why—why that's not the paper I had!" denied Russ.

"Of course it isn't!" seconded Bo. "The paper we found had a string of numbers with a letter of the alphabet before and after . . ."

"Serial numbers of bills," supplied Jim. "Three of 'em!"

"Rubbish!" denounced Mr. Tomlinson. "This is the paper that was handed me . . . and that's all I know about it. What are these boys trying to do—involve me? This is an outrage!"

Sheriff Blake nodded, considerately. "Never mind this, John. We have to put up with all sorts of wild clues and amateur detectives in

this business. You know how boys love mystery. They'd like to make this case complicated."

"Do you remember any of what you call the serial numbers?" asked Mr. Strickland.

"No," said Russ. "Do you, Bo?"

"Nothing except they began with a 'B' and ended with double 'A'."

"This is the paper I was given," repeated Mr. Tomlinson. "I've no idea what they're talking about."

"And neither have they," said the Sheriff.

"They may have," replied Mr. Strickland, quietly. "We receive lists of serial numbers of stolen currency which we're asked to look out for every few days. It's just possible Mr. Franklin may have jotted down some numbers he wished to investigate."

"But they're not here," rejoined Sheriff Blake, referring to the paper.

"And those figures," declared vice-president Strickland, "were not made by Mr. Franklin."

Sheriff Blake looked down at the numerals. They were odd amounts as though different quotations on a piece of property.

"Well, what's so strange about that?" the Sheriff wanted to know. "Couldn't he have been carrying someone else's figures on a deal around with him?"

"He could," Mr. Strickland admitted.

"You boys don't recognize this paper?" Sheriff Blake demanded. "Maybe you got the papers mixed. Maybe this belongs to one of you. Maybe you've got the paper you're talking about in one of your pockets?"

Jim, Russ and Bo shook their heads.

"Well, then, if you can't produce it . . . !"

"If you please, sir!" spoke up Bo, defiantly. "That should be up to Mr. Tomlinson!"

Bo was acting far from stupid now. He might be fat but he wasn't thick-headed. Just so long as it didn't take fast moving, he could supply the fast thinking. And this Mr. Tomlinson wasn't going to smooth over matters without offering a satisfactory explanation . . . not if he, Bo, could prevent it. Vice-president Strickland seemed to be giving some credence to his story at least. Just because Sheriff Blake thought he knew Mr. Tomlinson was no reason why . . . !

A rap sounded on the door. Policeman Hadley stuck his head in. "Say, Chief—Mr. Farnsworth and Mr. Ralston just drove up outside. They're asking for Mr. Tomlinson."

"Tell them I'll be right out," advised the wealthy owner of the cottage near Lakeside resort. "You're through with me, aren't you, Sheriff?"

"Why, yes, I guess so. Aren't we, Coroner?"

"Don't let him go till he gives you the right paper!" begged Bo.

"See here, Sheriff—do I have to stand for this?"

Mr. Tomlinson appeared to be controlling his temper with difficulty. He turned to vice-president Strickland. "You've known me for several years, Mr. Strickland, and also Ralston and Farnsworth. We've all been depositors in your bank. Is there any reason why we should be subjected to . . . ?"

"None at all," Mr. Strickland assured. "There must be some sort of misunderstanding. The boys seem so positive . . . "

"This is the thanks we get for trying to be of aid," said Mr. Tomlinson. "You'd rather take

the word of irresponsible kids than . . . !”

“You boys get out of here!” ordered Sheriff Blake, his patience finally exhausted, “Get out, I say! And don’t be spreading your crazy story over town. We’ve got enough of a scandal on our hands now for us not to be inventing any more!”

There was nothing for Jim, Russ and Bo to do but take their leave. Vice-president Strickland followed them out into the hall. Mr. Tomlinson lingered for a final word with Sheriff Blake.

“Boys,” said Mr. Strickland, guardedly, as they reached the sidewalk and encountered a curious crowd. “How sure are you . . . ?”

“Mr. Strickland!” pleaded Bo. “We’re not imagining things. That Mr. Tomlinson knows more than he’s letting on. Mr. Farnsworth warned us to be careful what we said. There he is now—sitting over there at the car’s wheel. I’ll bet they’re planning a get-away!”

“Nonsense!” disparaged Mr. Strickland. “Why should they do that? There’s nothing on them!”

“But that’s not saying there might not be!”

countered Russ. "If you really believe us, Mr. Strickland, then these men oughtn't be let to leave until they . . . !"

"You're perfectly right," agreed the vice-president. "But what can I do about it?"

"I'll tell you," suggested Bo. "Go over to those men and tell them Mr. Tomlinson wants to see 'em inside. If they fall for it, we may get a chance to look in their car. We might not find anything . . . then again—we might!"

"I'll do it," Mr. Strickland promised.

The boys hung back as the vice-president approached the car and extended his greetings. Fellow students in the crowd surrounded them and pestered them with questions which the chums declined to answer. "You'll see it in the paper," was Bo's most effective reply.

"They're getting out of the car."

"Sure," Bo grinned, nervously. "What else could they do without attracting suspicion? They may be in a hurry but they've got to act like they aren't."

"Bo—if you've got this thing wrong," faltered Russ, "you're going to make us look foolish."

"We're already supposed to be foolish," was Bo's rejoinder. "Come on!"

Farnsworth and Ralston had disappeared in the undertaking establishment, pushing through the crowd. Vice-president Strickland, who had continued on up the street as though returning to the bank, was accosted by anxious depositors. He stopped by the curb and looked back. The three chums had sauntered over to the car and were gazing through its windows.

"There's a robe thrown over some stuff in the back," discovered Bo. "Go around on the other side, Russ, open the door and see what's under it!"

"Gee, Bo, do you think I'd . . . !"

"Hurry! They'll be back out any second!"

Russ did as instructed. The crowd looked on in surprise at the interest the boys were displaying in the Tomlinson car. It was natural for the high-powered machine to be admired but unusual for anyone to open a door and look inside.

"Hey, you!" called Policeman Hadley. "Get away from that car!"

"Gee!" cried Russ, excitedly, as he lifted up

the robe, "here's some suitcases! They're planning on leaving town all right!"

"Can you open one—see what's in it?" urged Bo, one eye on the policeman. "Never mind the cop. He can't see what you're doing."

Russ was on the outer side of the car from the curb. With trembling fingers he pulled at the fastening and the suitcase came open.

"It's full of bills!" gasped Jim, who stood just behind him.

"What you boys doing?" snapped Policeman Hadley, approaching Bo.

"Grab a couple and shut the suitcase up!" Bo managed. Then, to the officer who had driven them to town in the sheriff's car, he said: "Aw, listen—can't we look at a swell car if we want to? What harm is there in that?"

"You've got no business monkeying," reprimanded Policeman Hadley, as the crowd deserted the front of the undertaking establishment to gather around the car. "Shut that door there, you—and beat it!"

Russ who had hastily closed the suitcase and pulled the robe back over it, stepped back from the car. In his pocket were two new hundred

dollar bills. He had just done an audacious thing at Bo's command and he was still short of breath from the shock at seeing a suitcase full of money.

"Okay," Bo said to the officer as Policeman Hadley dispersed the entire crowd. "Let's go, guys!"

Bo motioned down the street in the direction of the Peoples' Bank. Vice-president Strickland, waiting some distance away, disengaged himself from a group and hailed the boys.

"Quick!" cried Bo. "Russ here's got some new bills. There's a suitcase full in back. Maybe they've got serial numbers like the ones on Mr. Franklin's piece of paper! Those men must be robbers!"

"Follow me!" urged Mr. Strickland, "in the side entrance!"

He slipped the boys into the bank as a crowd milled on the outside. Russ produced the bills and Mr. Strickland exclaimed his surprise. "Hmmm! These look like they came fresh from the Federal Reserve. Just a minute now till I look over the lists on Mr. Franklin's desk."

Working against time, each second valuable, Mr. Strickland grabbed at papers in the late Mr. Franklin's desk drawers.

"Ah—here's a list from the Bankers' Protective Association and three numbers checked!"

"That's the three!" cried Russ, looking on. "I remember them now. 'B-5 2 4 3 6 8 1 7 9 AA'. . . . That's one! Holy smoke! If these bills we've got are in that same list . . . !"

"If they are," said Mr. Strickland, thumbing hurriedly down the long list of serial numbers, "then Mr. Tomlinson and his *friends* are the men who robbed the Michigan Savings Bank three weeks ago of one hundred thousand in new currency!"

Vice-president Strickland's finger stopped at a number.

"Read me the number on that first bill," he ordered.

"It's 'B-5 2 4 3 6 8 2 0 1 A A'," reported Russ.

"That's it!" cried Mr. Strickland. "I can see this all now. Mr. Franklin came by these bills which were passed in to us from outside. He no doubt found that they'd come originally

from either Mr. Tomlinson or one of his so-called friends . . . and feeling that they were trustworthy men, decided to run out and interview them quietly about how this money came into their possession. When he realized they were the actual thieves, he probably accused them and they shot him, making it look like a suicide. No wonder they were anxious to get hold of that paper with the incriminating serial numbers. We've got to catch them! Give me that telephone!"

Mr. Strickland tried to reach the morgue where he had left Sheriff Blake such a short time before. As he was on the phone, Bo called: "We'll beat it outside, Mr. Strickland. If they're not gone yet we'll try to stop 'em!"

"Look out!" cried the vice-president after them. "Those men are dangerous!"

As Jim, Russ, and Bo reached the street they saw the men they sought just entering their car. The snow storm had abated but it was quite dark. Highways would be drifted slowing up traffic although the state plows would keep the main roads open. That Mr. Tomlinson and his associates were in a hurry was evi-

dent. The motor roared almost at once. Sheriff Blake, standing on the sidewalk to see them off, was suddenly hailed by Coroner Mil-likon who came hurrying from the undertaking establishment.

"The coroner's gotten the telephone call!" cried Bo.

"John! Wait a minute!" the chums heard Sheriff Blake call out, as soon as the coroner had spoken to him.

The high-powered car pulled away from the curb. Sheriff Blake leaped for the running board, tugging to get a service revolver from its holster.

Rat-tat-tat-tat!

A fusillade of shots poured from the car and Merlin's sheriff who had preferred to discredit testimony against his resorter friends, toppled into the snow along the curb, bullets in his arm and shoulder.

"We've got to stop 'em!" cried Russ as spectators ran for cover and the car got under way.

Almost in front of the chums, next door to the bank, stood the truck belonging to Garrett's Grocery and Meat Market. Its motor was run-

ning as its driver had gone in to pick up some deliveries.

"Quick!" shouted the resourceful Bo. "Get in that truck. Drive it sidewise across the street! Block their path!"

Jim and Russ jumped for the truck. Russ had driven a similar machine all one summer on one of his father's construction jobs. He released the brake, put the gear in low and stepped on the gas.

"Hurry!" begged Bo from the sidewalk.

Shots were ringing out as Garrett's two policemen on duty outside the morgue, blazed away after the departing car with the felling of their chief. These shots were returned with a stream of bullets which appeared to be coming from a sub machine gun. These bullets shattered windows on both sides of Garrett's main street as citizens flattened themselves against lamp posts, dodged in doorways and prostrated themselves upon the sidewalk.

Garrett's delivery truck shot away from the curb and swung about just in time to be rammed by the now speeding car. There was a terrific crash which jolted Jim off the running board

and knocked Russ away from the wheel. Jim dragged Russ from the truck's cab on the further side from the car where he was joined by Bo who had sought refuge behind the truck from the gunfire.

"Great work!" cried Bo. "You stopped 'em cold!"

The windshield of what was now known to be a bandit's car was splintered by the impact and Farnsworth, badly cut, staggered into the street. Tomlinson and Ralston followed, both bearing guns. Tomlinson had the sub machine gun while Ralston appeared with a sawed-off shotgun. Exposed now to the fire of the two police, the three men ran around the truck and directly into Jim, Russ and Bo.

"You . . . !" swore Tomlinson, and levelled his gun.

It was an unexpected turn of events, a development the boys hadn't foreseen which found them helpless, facing death at the hands of men whose own lives were hanging in the balance. It was useless to expect mercy since they had been the ones responsible for revealing the true nature of these criminal impostors who had

sought refuge in the law-abiding community of Garrett. Horror-stricken, Jim, Russ and Bo saw Tomlinson's finger twitch against the trigger.

"No! No!" screamed Ralston, grabbing at Tomlinson's arm. "You fool! Use these birds as a shield! They'll get us out of here!"

Tomlinson, nodding grimly, issued orders. "All right, you pups! Get in back of us. You're covering our retreat—see? If they fire at us, they'll wing you. If you make a break for it, we'll get you. Snap it up!"

Farnsworth, a gruesome sight with his bleed-face and hands, grasped Russ and swung him about, pressing a revolver against his side.

"Keep in a line with me!"

"I get that boy!" ordered Tomlinson.

"No—I'm hurt. I need him!" begged Farnsworth.

Bo, as desperate as was the situation, could not restrain a nervous laugh. They were fighting over Russ because he was twice the size of either he or Jim and made the best human object to hide behind. But Tomlinson relinquished his claim at seeing Farnsworth was

really badly spent. He grabbed Jim instead, as Ralston took hold of Bo.

“Don’t shoot!” screamed the three chums as the bandits started their retreat, edging toward the corner where they hoped to dodge off main street and escape along the side of the Peoples Bank.

Citizens who had dived into Garrett’s hardware store, had been supplied with weapons and ammunition from stock, joining the two policemen in an attempt to capture the surprise bandits. But they withheld their fire as they saw the ruse that had been employed. Tomlinson and Ralston, however, firing over the shoulders of their human protectors, kept the street clear of followers and reached the corner in safety. As they backed into the side street, an automobile with a man and woman in the front seat, approached.

“Stop that car!” ordered Tomlinson, blocking its path and levelling his gun. “Get out—leave the motor running!”

The frightened man and woman slid out.

“Don’t shoot!” she begged.

“Jake—take the wheel!” directed Tomlin-

son, referring to Ralston. "Mickie and I will get in back. Turn the car around and hit it out Number Eleven!"

Pushing the bleeding and exhausted Farnsworth into the car, Tomlinson jumped in after him. Ralston leaped into the driver's seat and began to swing the car around. There were shouts from Garrett's main street as the chase was resumed with the disappearance of the bandits. Jim, Russ and Bo stood pressed against the side of the bank, apparently neglected. But, as the car swung about, Tomlinson leaned murderously from the car and pointed his sub machine gun.

"Wise kids, eh?" he shouted, and pulled the trigger.

But Farnsworth, on the floor of the car, reached up his arm and deflected the bullets, a stream of them chipping the bricks of the bank building above the chums' heads.

"Whew!" gasped Bo. "Close call! . . . But they got away!"

Vice-president Strickland, who had watched the affair from a bank window, helpless to be of aid, joined the boys on the street.

"That was a new car last week!" moaned the owner, as he sat down on the curb with his wife, who had fainted, in his arms.

"No telling what it'll be when they get through with it," said Jim, who could feel his heart pounding in his temples.

"Watch that car and see where it turns off!" cried Bo. "See if they really are going out Number Eleven!"

Policeman Hadley and his fellow officer, Faber, rounded the corner cautiously. Venturesome citizens pointed out the departing car and the owner, his wife coming to, pleaded with the Garrett blue coats to "do something."

"There they go—out Number Eleven toward Detroit!" shouted Bo as the car made a left turn on the state highway, three blocks down.

"We can't catch 'em!" said Policeman Hadley, disconsolately.

"Yes you can!" insisted Bo. "How about that drawbridge—ten miles out! Can't we telephone to the bridge keeper and have him draw the bridge? . . . If you follow 'em . . . !"

“Good boy!” shouted Policeman Hadley.
“You’ve got a brain!” He hailed a passing cab.

“Driver—out Number Eleven as fast as your bus can go!”

The two policemen jumped in. Armed citizens prepared to follow in a second car which had been commandeered.

“Right in here to the phone!” obliged vice-president Strickland.

An excited group gathered about Bo as he plied the receiver and got central to put the call through.

“Hello—Bridge Keeper? . . . This is Garrett calling!” said Bo, whose only show of excitement was a shortness of breath. “Say—there’s three bandits who’ve shot up the town who’ve grabbed a new sedan and are trying to make a get-away on Number Eleven. Will you draw the bridge right away? They’re being followed by the police! . . . You haven’t much time! . . . Okay!”

“That’s fine!” approved Mr. Strickland. “I’d like to be in on what happens out there. Suppose we jump in my car that’s parked outside and join the chase!”

The chums were only too willing. It was a wild ride which ensued with the car skidding from side to side and sending snow flying as it followed in the path made by the giant snow-plows. The highway stretched out in a straight line for six miles after the two mile corner was reached and far ahead could be discerned the cars on the trail of the bandits.

"Garrett has never seen a day like this," was Mr. Strickland's comment. "You boys are certainly to be . . .!"

"There's the bridge ahead!" cried Russ. "Look—she's drawn . . . and there's the car. They've got the bridge keeper and they're forcing him to close the bridge so they can get across! . . . But there's our two policemen! Say—where's Farnsworth? . . . He must have been left in the car! . . . Ralston and Tomlinson are barricading themselves in the bridge house! . . . Oh, boy—we're in time to see the finish of this!"

"Let's hope it's the finish!" said Bo. "Better pull up your car, Mr. Strickland, or you'll get in range of the bullets. That bridge is closing now and it looks like they're going to make a

break for it . . . dash to their car and beat it. See how they're keeping everyone from getting near! Oh! They've got Policeman Hadley . . .!"

The policeman was seen to fall. He clasped his right knee as he lay on the ground beside the road. Wriggling into a snow-covered gulley, the officer continued firing.

"If they ever leave that bridge house they're goners!" breathed Russ. "I doubt if they can reach the car alive!"

"No?" said Bo. "See what they're going to do? They're waving a white handkerchief . . . and they're coming out, using the old bridge keeper as a shield this time . . ."

Once more those who would capture the desperadoes were forced to withhold their fire as the bridge keeper emerged from his house, hands above his head, Ralston and Tomlinson crouching behind him as they crept toward the car.

"The gasoline tank's on the back. Shoot a hole through the gasoline tank!" Bo suddenly cried out.

Members of the posse were quick to act on

the suggestion. Guns were trained on the rear of the car and a volley of shots rang out.

"Too bad about that guy's car!" grinned Bo.

"Boy!" commended Russ. "How do you think of such things? . . . When there's nothing doing you haven't an idea but when we're in a jam you always . . . !"

But Bo, eyes on the bandits' movements, silenced Russ by calling, "All right, Mr. Strickland . . . let's go again!"

Ralston and Tomlinson had taken the old bridge keeper up to the side of the car and slipped into the front seat, then sent him sprawling with a shove. Apparently oblivious that the gasoline tank was leaking like a sieve, they stepped on the accelerator and roared across the bridge. They were followed at once by the citizen volunteers with Policeman Faber remaining behind to care for his wounded fellow officer, Hadley.

The chase continued for another three miles when the motor of the bandit car began to cough. It was a dry, asthmatic cough and the speed of the car diminished suddenly, then became jerky.

"It won't be long now!" observed Bo.

There were high snow-covered embankments on both sides at the place where the car finally came to a stop. Into the road a wearied Tomlinson and Ralston staggered, blood spattered, hands high above their heads.

"Out of bullets!" Bo exclaimed, gleefully.
"We've got 'em!"

Irate citizens boldly closed in on the men who had posed as respectable resorters, hiding their gang activities among decent people. Farnsworth was found dead on the floor of the car from loss of blood. Ralston and Tomlinson bore several bullet wounds, numerous cuts and bruises. They were still defiant and sullen upon their capture. And Tomlinson's rage knew no bounds when, on being searched, a paper containing serial numbers of three bills he had put into circulation in Garrett, was disclosed.

"These figures are Mr. Franklin's," identified Mr. Strickland. "You overpowered him and shot him with his own revolver when he tried to resist you. Pretty clever, Tomlinson, but not clever enough . . . at least for these three boys . . . !"

"Oh, I'd have gotten away all right if it hadn't been for this blankety blank drawbridge!"

"Yes—and who do you suppose had the bridge drawn so you couldn't pass?"

Tomlinson stared. "That deaf mute?" he accused.

Bo's face reddened. He shuffled uneasily from one foot to the other. Now that the excitement was over, Bo seemed devoid of inspiration.

"Jim and Russ . . ." he began, and cleared his throat. "Anyhow . . ."

On arriving back in Garrett, with Tomlinson and Ralston being placed in the county jail, it was to learn that most of the hundred thousand dollars had been recovered in the suitcases taken from the bandit car. A reward offered by the Bankers' Protective Association was due the boys. As the money was placed in their hands, Bo examined his bills carefully. When asked the reason, he grinned and replied: "I'm taking no chances. No one's going to pass me any bad money. I'm checking up on the serial numbers!" Then, turning to Jim and Russ, his face

suddenly beaming, he exclaimed: "Say, fellows—I just happened to think—this means we'll be attending Templeton together! I guess maybe it wasn't a bad idea after all, keeping in training by . . . er . . . tackling the bandits!"

THE UMBRELLA FORMATION

THE UMBRELLA FORMATION

IT SET the campus laughing—that Umbrella Formation gag—and it also set Big Ben Ferdy, line crushing fullback of N.Y.U., up as a guy with a gorgeous sense of humor. All the co-eds thought so anyhow, even if Coach “Hard-boiled” Durgan, didn’t. And one dark-eyed, fluffy-haired little co-ed in particular—Maizy Edwards by name—she told Big Ben she considered his little joke “just too cute for words.” After that, well—the only thing that remained for Big Ben to do, as a chivalrous gesture of appreciation, was to go out and make four touchdowns against Carnegie Tech!

It all happened one miserable, damp, wet, rainy, blue Thursday afternoon when you’d have thought any sane-minded coach wouldn’t even have let a hog wallow on Ohio Field. The squad had reported at the Field House, as per usual, but none of them was expecting to be called on to waltz out onto that ocean of mud

which they could see through the windows. And the idea of a scrimmage to boot was enough to put a muddy taste in the mouth.

"It's a tough afternoon for ducks," says Big Ben, looking out into the worse than inclement weather."

"You said it," agreed Russ Stout, quarterback, "Good place for a guy to turn an ankle or get in over the running boards."

"Don't worry," speaks up Steve Norris, left half, "Coach won't send us out in that quagmire. Not with the biggest game of the year coming up next Saturday. What we'll get today will be the little old blackboard."

"Skull practice!" snorts Wild Bill Jenkins, right half, "I'd just as soon play chess!"

All of which gives you a fair thermometer reading on what a rainy day does to football temperaments.

Just then Coach "Hardboiled" Durgan stamps in, dripping wet, and takes a look at the squad that's gone into a dismal huddle over by the lockers like they're all in a blue funk.

"What the ding dong's the big idea!" he barks, "Why aren't you bums in uniform?"

The eyebrows of the squad members go up in surprise.

"Why . . . er . . . a . . ." stammers Russ, feeling that someone's elected to answer, "We didn't figure it would be necessary to . . . er . . . dress for chalk talk!"

Coach Durgan figuratively, and darn near literally, hits the ceiling.

"Who the dingy dong dong said anything about a chalk talk?" he blazes, "You bozos get into your moleskins p.d.q.! You're going to put in a real workout!"

Could a bolt of lightning have wriggled her way into the locker room and split open the floor, the Violet squad couldn't have been more flabbergasted. Steve Norris stares at the coach a minute like he figures the boss has gone plumb loco. Then he busts out laughing.

"What's so funny?" the coach wants to know.

Steve's face sobers.

"You—you don't *mean* it?" he comes back, "Us go out there in that downpour?"

"Why not?" demands the coach, "High time you birds were getting used to the going on

a wet field. Why, in the old days . . . ”

“There he goes!” mumbles Big Ben, in an undertone, “Rubbing it into us about how soft we’ve got it compared to the time when he used to star with old N.Y.U. If you’d ask me, I think it’s a lot of hooey!”

“Me, too!” seconds Steve, “And doesn’t it nauseate you the way he tells about the stars of his time making us look like a bunch of pikers?”

“That’s so much bunk!” brands Russ, “Just to keep us from getting over confident.”

“Back in nineteen-eleven,” says the coach, “We played Colgate in a raging thunderstorm and here you fellows are complaining about trotting out in a gentle shower. You’re spoiled, that’s what’s the matter. We’ve had dry weather for every game this season. But the breaks aren’t always going to be with us. And when you breakable dolls stack up against those Nebraska Cornhuskers in Yankee Stadium next Saturday, you’re not going to have an alibi leg to stand on if you’re defeated. I even insisted on bringing Nebraska east for the first time in history this season with the hopes of breaking the jinx. I’ve gotten tired taking undefeated

teams out to Lincoln to have 'em bumped off by those grim reapers. So this year, if you can't do what no other N.Y.U. outfit's been able to put across, I resign!"

"Is that a promise?" whispers Big Ben, and some of the boys grin.

"How's that?" snaps "Hardboiled," "Speak right up, Bennie, don't be bashful."

"I was only remarking to Steve that it's raining harder now," explains our star fullback, bending over his shoe strings, innocent-like.

"The harder, the better!" raves the coach, "If you backfield men were as fast as the boys on the teams I played with, you could go through formations without getting your heads wet!"

The squad members look at one another trying to decide whether Coach Durgan's joshing or whether he means it. And then Big Ben Ferdy lets loose with his prize remark.

"All right, coach," he says, as solemn as three judges, "You can't stump us. If you old timers did that, we can do it, too!"

Now it's Coach Durgan's turn to look puzzled. He hasn't intended anyone of the

squad to take his exaggeration literally but since Big Ben has pulled this fast one, Coach decides to make him put up or shut up.

"Oh, you can, can you?" he challenges, "Well, old boy, you'll have to show me!"

And Coach Durgan storms out into the rain, pushing those that have already climbed into their togs, ahead of him. He's not any more than out the door when Big Ben, grinning from ear to ear, gets a hold of Russ Stout, Steve Norris and Wild Bill Jenkins and takes 'em off in a corner for a conference.

A couple minutes later when Coach blows his whistle to start practice, with most of the squad standing around wet and shivering, what should be seen coming from the Field House, on the splashing double-quick, but our crack backfield quartet led by Big Ben Ferdy—all of 'em equipped with huge umbrellas!

Say, it's a sight for dampened spirits, these practical jesters captained by Big Ben, as they come prancing onto the field, sloshing through the water and mud, but taking elaborate care that they don't get their heads wet.

"Line up, you guys!" calls Big Ben, as they

get in hailing distance of the first team gang.

And the men, forgetting the terrible condition of the field and their own natural aversion to getting mussed up, swing into action. Center Bagley grabs the ball and the line forms around him, hands and knees down in the mud.

"Signals!" bawls Russ Stout, from under his umbrella.

A couple of brave newspaper reporters with copies of their papers over their heads to keep off the pelting rain, are taking in the comedy from the empty stands. Coach Durgan is taking it in from the sidelines, too, and the longer he looks on, the more his jaw bulges.

The balls snaps back and Russ Stout, making the neatest one-handed catch you ever saw, turns and spanks the pigskin against Big Ben's ribs as the big Violet fullback comes slipping and sliding through. Their umbrellas bump and for a second it looks like they're going to get their precious heads wet but they do a fast piece of juggling and save the day. Steve Norris and Wild Bill Jenkins, meanwhile, have galloped off ahead of them, around right end, to form interference. They hold their umbrellas in

front of them, running right into the rain, and its a spectacle that makes some of the players sit right down in the mud and scream.

"Signals!" yells Russ Stout again, as serious as though umbrellas are a part of standard equipment.

But that's all the further he gets. Coach "Hardboiled" Durgan comes striding out on the field, stamping mud right and left.

"Put those ding dong bumbershoots down!" he bellows, "You're playing Nebraska Saturday and this is all the more seriously you take practice! There'll be no more horseplay, understand? And just for this, you're going to put in the toughest scrimmage you ever went through!"

But nothing Coach can say after that really had any effect, except that Big Ben's little stunt spreads sunshine where all had been gloom and the boys go into action with grins in place of gourches. And don't think they don't need the grins! Baby, the way Coach drives that first team! And the work he saddles off onto Big Ben! But Big Ben soaks up all the punishment and cries for more. He's already got the repu-

tation of being one of the most terrific line plungers in the East and he proves in no time that he's just as terrific through the mud as on dry ground . . . which is something the Coach has been anxious to find out.

The shades of night pity the lowly but valiant reserves! Human shock absorbers for the battering ram attack that's launched at them, they keep pulling themselves from the mud only to be trampled down again until they're reduced to an incoherent mass. And one of the mud-caked subs, at the finish, staggers up to Assistant Coach MacKay with a pathetic request.

"If you please, sir, will you see if you can make out my number and tell me who I am?"

Next morning, the newspaper reporters, who have ventured out to the field on the drabbest day of the year without daring to hope that they'll be rewarded by a story, break out with a heading which sets the college laughing . . . and talking.

N. Y. U. BACKS DRILL
UNDER UMBRELLAS
Answer Coach's Challenge That,

If Fast Enough, They Wouldn't
Get Their Heads Wet.

COACH DURGAN ENDS HOAX
And Has Big Ben Ferdy, Instigator,
Do Extra Line Plunging — Ferdy
Comes Through With Five Touch-
downs.

The story is harmless enough but it doesn't go down so well with Coach Durgan who's got Nebraska so much on his mind he can't sleep nights. His New York University football team has another undefeated season in its grasp if it can get around its annual stumbling block —those rampaging Cornhuskers. In fact Coach Durgan's even got it figured how N.Y.U. can claim the national championship because his team's defeated Carnegie Tech, 6 to 0, which eleven has tripped up Notre Dame's latest edition of Four Horsemen, 12 to 7. And Notre Dame, outside of losing to Carnegie Tech has walloped every other team in the country worth walloping . . . with the exception, of course, of N.Y.U.

The Thursday night scrimmage marks the

end of workouts for the all-deciding game and Friday morning the coach takes his squad down to the Yankee Stadium where he sends his first, second and third teams through a light signal drill, so's to turn the field over to the Corn-huskers by afternoon.

Talk about pre-game excitement! New York newspapers have been bally-hooing the contest for weeks as the piece de resistance of intersectional football and special trains are being run out of Chicago bringing hundreds of mid-west and far west enthusiasts. The Yankee stadium has been sold out for weeks with close onto eighty-five thousand assorted specimens of humanity due to see the battle. All the big coaches in the country are to be on hand with enough notables from every walk of life to do credit to a Dempsey-Tunney fight. N.Y.U. in a few smashing seasons, has come up from the cellar of nonentity to the highest pinnacle of prominence. Old New York's practically buried in Violet and no one has even thought to miss what was once decried as a national calamity—the discontinuance of the annual Army-Navy game.

“Betting even!” is the cry on the streets, with scalpers offering tickets for twenty-five, fifty and a hundred apiece—according to location.

“Violet Placing Dependence on the Four Mudscows of N.Y.U.” says a paper heading, still poking fun at the umbrella episode, “Weather Man Predicts Rain for Tomorrow!”

Another paper sounds the warning that N.Y.U.’s got to stop King Moulton, the Cornhuskers’ triple threat, if they hope to win. “Country’s two leading line plungers to meet,” it broadcast, “Great duel expected between Big Ben Ferdy and King Moulton. Outcome may decide game!”

Early Friday evening, in a drug store near the campus, Big Ben Ferdy meets a dark-eyed, fluffy-haired little co-ed by appointment. Her name is Maizy Edwards, in case you have forgotten, and, to also refresh your memory, she has just finished telling Big Ben that she has thought his little joke “just too cute for words.”

“Unfortunately the coach didn’t,” says the Violet’s big fullback, “And he’s been riding me ever since. I had a deuce of a time getting this ticket for you. He wanted to know who I

was getting it for and of course I wouldn't tell him and he said there'd been such a terrific demand for seats in field boxes that the "U" was very strict about who they gave them out to. Had to have the names and addresses of the parties . . . and all that stuff. I could get a hundred bucks for this pasteboard right now."

"And I wouldn't take a million for it," breathes Maizy, "Oh, Bennie, it was wonderful of you to go to all this trouble just to get me a seat right down close to you. I just couldn't think of sitting away up in the stands trying to find you through opera glasses and having people jumping up in front of me all the time."

"No, I don't imagine that would be so pleasant," admits Big Ben, "That is, if you really don't want to take your eyes off me."

"I'll be watching you every fraction of a second," promises Maizy, with misty adoration in her eyes, "Let's see, just where did you say this seat was?"

"Right opposite the forty yard line," informs Big Ben, "Couldn't be more than ten yards better. Right in the front row. Out in the open, though. I sure hope the weather's nice."

"Oh, the weather won't bother me a bit. I won't even have time to think of it. My, Bennie, I wish you could be taking a taste . . . just one wee little taste of my chocolate marshmallow sundae? Couldn't you? I mean—wouldn't you? I'm sure it wouldn't hurt you the least bit and I feel so selfish sitting here, eating it all by my lonesome."

"Sorry," declines Big Ben, "But I'll have one with you tomorrow night."

"My, what marvelous self control!" sighs Maizy, "I wish *I* had it. I really shouldn't be eating this. I'm getting fat. Honestly! I was perfectly scandalized when I stepped on the scales the other day. And I didn't get my penny back either. No, I picked the wrong slot. Of course, *I* would! But when I saw where the pointer went, well, I looked around quick to make sure none of my friends were looking. Oh, must you be going?"

"Yeah, coach's orders. Got to turn in early."

"My, I should say Coach Durgan *is* ridiculous! Why, it's only ten minutes to nine! It's a wonder you men don't revolt."

"But you don't understand, Maizy," explains

Big Ben, with the patience of true love, "A team has to have training rules. I'm really not supposed to even be out with you."

Maizy stops in the drug store and registers indignation.

"Oh, is that so. And what's the coach got against me?"

"It isn't that, Maizy. He wants us to keep our minds strictly on football. That's the big reason why I couldn't let him know who I was after that ticket for. If he got wind you were to be sitting down along the sidelines he'd throw a fit clear across the Yankee stadium."

"Well, there's where I think he's making a great mistake," says Maizy. "And I'd tell him to his face if I saw him. Objecting to a man's sweetheart sitting near him! Why, if he only realized what an inspiration they could be, he'd reserve a row of field boxes and put them all down close!"

"No doubt," swallows Big Ben, growing uneasy, "But you can't ever convince him of that, Maizy, so we'd just better be thankful for small favors. Honest, you'll have to hurry if you want me to be seeing you home."

Perhaps Coach "Hardboiled" Durgan is a descendant of some of the prophets. Anyhow he must had a hunch when he put his Violet squad through the workout of their lives on Thursday's wet field, because what's heralded to be the biggest day in N.Y.U. history arrives in the midst of a cold drizzle. By noon all the pretty bunting hung from the steel framework of the converted baseball yard, are drooping and dripping. And fans being let in to the unreserved section are carrying rolls of newspaper to put under and above them. No question about it, the Yankee stadium looks as wet and bleak as the flattened out hide of a water spaniel. Rivulets of water are running down the concrete aisles and nice little pools are standing in the boxes. As for the field, especially the infield around pitcher's box where so many hurlers have met their Waterloo trying to sneak 'em past Babe Ruth. Most of the water's still there, with more added to it, the diamond resembling a first class bog. The outfield's not so bad except that the grass is glistening with moisture and footing's as slippery as the floor of a public dance hall.

The game's scheduled to start at two o'clock

but Coach Nord of Nebraska and Coach Durgan have their squads out an hour early, wearing hooded garments, getting 'em accustomed to the juicy condition underfoot and having 'em rough up the sod a bit so's there won't be quite so much sliding during the battle.

It's a great day for Major In Flu Enza and General Pneu Monia. These two boys are the first ones to crash the gates, wriggling their way in with their entire staff, unnoticed. Right on their heels comes One Eyed Connolly who's always needed to make a real sport occasion complete. And after him trails and stamps and fumes and pushes close to eighty-five thousand pairs of rubbers, and galoshes, with about the same number of umbrellas, slickers, and blankets. Talk about your invasion! And, at the very tail-end, due to arrive about the middle of the first quarter, is Mayor Jimmie Walker and party!

Exactly at one forty-five o'clock, the Nebraska and N.Y.U. bands appear from opposite ends of the field and wade to the center where they meet, shaking the rain off their instruments and joining ranks to play each other's college

songs. The bands bring a howl when they blare out the number, "How Dry I Am!" which strikes the folks in the stands as a pathetic attempt at humor. And the heavens open up with an extra heavy downpour which fogs the notes and sends the bands scampering, out of alignment, to sheltered places in the stadium.

All in all it's perfect football weather—the kind Michigan had when her undefeated eleven went up against Northwestern and lost out in a weird game, 3 to 2, with the ball actually floating away at times and players being treated for submersion.

But there's one little girl in a field box down opposite the forty yard line who's cruelly exposed to the elements and yet who thinks the sun is shining the minute her eyes come to rest on N.Y.U.'s man of the hour—Big Ben Ferdy—unanimously proclaimed one of the greatest backs in the country.

"Yoo hoo!" she cries, as her idol passes near her, "Yoo hoo, Bennie!"

And when her knight of the gridiron singles her out, with a chivalrous wave of his hand, as *one* among eighty-five thousand, Maizy Ed-

wards could have died with a smile on her lips.

But Coach "Hardboiled" Durgan could have died for other reasons. And even though it's pretty close to game time, with the team gathering round him for final instructions, he's so steamed up that he turns on the offending full-back.

"See here, Bennie!" he reprimands, "I raised merry Ned getting hold of that ticket for you . . . and you spill it on a girl friend! You told me it was for someone very important!"

"She is—to *me*, sir," says the Violet's big hope, unblinking.

And there's none of the players that gets a laugh out of this.

"She's just a feather-brained. . . !" starts the coach, but thinks better of it as Big Ben clenches his fists. "I'm sorry, Bennie," he apologizes, and Big Ben accepts the apology with a curt toss of his head.

As the referee's whistle blows, calling the game, N.Y.U. lets loose her trench mortar yell, ending with a booming blast from a small cannon that sends up such a vibration it seems to spill more rain from the clouds.

"Oh, what a day for a funeral!" says somebody.

"Yeah, whose do you mean?" cries another, "N.Y.U.'s or Nebraska's?"

And before the first half is over the answer is, "N.Y.U.'s!" For one thing, Nebraska wins the toss and chooses to defend the end of the field that's in the best condition which means that, changing ends every quarter, they get the base-ball diamond, now practically under water, right in front of their goal for the second and fourth quarters. High-handed strategy this! And look how those cornhuskers make it work out. Their coach is wise enough to realize that it's twice as tough going in the oozy mud at the diamond end and he'd rather have N.Y.U. floundering in the mire, trying to get back a Nebraska lead in the last quarter (the fates willing) than his own team, in a like predicament. (Heaven forbid!) N.Y.U. kicks off and the Cornhuskers, on the best end of the field, push the ball back to their forty yard line with King Moulton carrying the pigskin every other play. Then the Violet holds and Moulton drops a long, beautifully placed punt, smack in a small

lagoon on N. Y.U.'s seven yard line. There's nothing for N.Y.U. to do but kick and Big Ben, standing back behind his own goal, almost slips and falls as he toes the ball. His kick goes out on the Violet's thirty-seven yard line and the crowd groans. But Nebraska can't do anything in the mud and King Moulton tries a field goal which goes wild. The first quarter then resolves itself into a punting duel with Nebraska getting the better of the exchanges until about four minutes from the end when the Cornhuskers cut loose with a terrific offensive. By this time the players on both teams are so black and smeared that their jerseys look all one color. And the ball has to be wiped off with a towel after every play. But just as the whistle screeches for the end of the first quarter, Nebraska crashes through for a first down on N.Y.U.'s Twenty-nine yard line, right at the edge of the muddy sector!

"What luck!" moans a Violet supporter, "Now they change goals and get the good end of the field to work on!"

Which is precisely as the Nebraska coach has figured, just to prove that dreams sometimes

come true. And do the Cornhuskers take advantage of this golden set-up. Oh, *do* they? Old King Moulton drives through the line and off the ends, slipping, sliding, smashing . . . gaining two, four, six and eight yards at a clip . . . keeping to even numbers until the ball gets to N.Y.U.'s one yard line.

"Hold 'em!" begs the Violet.

"Don't let 'em score, Bennie!" shrieks a tremulous, high-pitched voice from a field box at the forty yard line.

But Big Ben Ferdy plus the whole N.Y.U. team and half the New York police force can't hold the Nebraska huskies now. They tear through the line with an impact that's heard above Graham MacNamee's voice by ten million listeners-in. And this doesn't mean maybe!

A couple seconds more and King Moulton's place-kicked goal for the extra point after touchdown and the Violet colors look like they've been dipped in India ink.

Score: Nebraska, 7; N.Y.U. 0.

And the gloom doesn't lift any when the

rampaging Cornhuskers, inflamed with the killer's lust, kick off to N.Y.U. and splash down the field to stop Russ Stout, who's fumbled the wet ball, almost in his tracks. The Violet's forced to punt again and another smashing march by Nebraska begins. This King Moulton is certainly up to his advertisements. Coach Durgan's supposed to have devised a special defense just to stop him but, either the defense has shrunk in the rain or else it isn't adequate for the King is good for at least two yards on every try.

"Believe you me, folks!" shouts Graham, over the air, "This boy King Moulton is one whale of a player!"

And a minute before the end of the first half, King adds to his reputation by pounding through for his second touchdown, tacking on the extra point with another perfect place-kick. The Nebraska stands commence singing a solemn requiem in honor of their late lamented rivals, as if the poor Violet supporters aren't taking enough punishment already what with the rain and the spectacle of their undefeated idols in the process of being slaughtered.

"Should think we'd know better than play these cornhuskers again," wails a fan, "It's easier to beat some team that's beat them, the way we defeated Notre Dame by walloping Carnegie Tech!"

The ten minutes between halves seems ten ages to the eighty-five thousand who're damp and chilly, the majority of 'em downhearted. About thirty thousand try to warm up and pep up by eating hot dogs slathered in mustard.

Coach "Hardboiled" Durgan has his players, who are stuccoed in mud, peel off their sopping wet togs, take a shower, and climb into new, dry outfits. It makes 'em feel a hundred percent better and just as he gets 'em in this condition he makes 'em feel a hundred percent worse by one of the classiest tongue-lashings ever administered in any tongue. The coach seemingly doesn't take into consideration the fact that a team can't gain much ground unless it has the ball in its possession. And since Nebraska's had the ball for nine-tenths of the first half, Big Ben Ferdy and his playmates haven't had much chance to strut their stuff.

"What the ding dong's wrong with you

men?" he razzes. "You're rotten, the whole ding dong bunch of you! Line's like a sieve and the backfield's got the punch of a weak lemonade! Fourteen to nothing! Suffering murder! And I bring Nebraska east to hand us a trimming like this!"

The coach raves on, getting personal, till everybody on the squad is about ready to chew nails. Then he sends 'em out into the rain with teeth-chattering thumps on the back and a couple of red hot admonitions which, translated, has the Horatio Alger flavor of "Sink or Swim!"

"It certainly is wet," broadcasts Graham, repeating this information for the eleventy-leventh time for the benefit of possible new tuners-in and want of anything else to broadcast at that particular moment. "This weather certainly doesn't compare with that of old California. I tell you, folks, I can't ever forget my experience in the Rose Bowl at Pasadena and the sight of those gorgeous mountains! But here we are in the Yankee Stadium, entirely surrounded by rain. Hello—here come the two teams back on the field—in row boats. That's

what they should be in, and I don't mean maybe! Boy, oh boy! Don't they look pretty! All decked out in fresh uniforms . . . but they won't be that way long. Eh, Phil? . . . Ha! Ha! Ha! . . . Phil says he wouldn't play out there in that sea of mud today if you rolled up the Yankee Stadium and put it in his pocket! . . . All right, folks, get ready . . . second half coming up . . . and I'm going to give it to you as long as my tonsils hold out . . .!"

A two touchdown lead on a field that's spongy with water is like the Yanks being out in front, 15 to 1, with Herbie Pennock pitching. And the strategy of the Nebraska coach having worked out so perfectly, it's evident now that the orders are for the Cornhuskers to ride through the rest of the game on the defensive. The Violet comes back with a determined drive and it develops into a body-bruising battle, the ball changing hands between the thirty yard lines. The field's so muddy that it looks like, for every foot gained ahead, there's two feet slipped behind. And the players on both sides are wearing themselves ragged pulling each other loose from the pasty earth.

Starting the last quarter, N.Y.U. has the ball on the Cornhusker's thirty-two yard line with what looks like an impassable morass ahead. And, in an effort to save the Violet the added humiliation of being held scoreless, Russ Stout calls on Big Ben to try for a field goal.

"YEA!" cries N.Y.U. as their big fullback makes good, giving them something to shout about for the first time during the game.

"Marvelous!" announces Graham, "Right from his thirty-eight yard line. Fourteen to three. Well, every little bit helps. Ha! Ha! Phil's just figured out that Bennie had to kick two and a half pounds of mud over with the ball. Wouldn't doubt that in the least. Folks, you ought to be here. No, I guess you're better off where you are. It's raining harder now . . . and getting dark, too . . ."

N.Y.U. kicks off to Nebraska. The Cornhuskers start a slow, smashing advance. With the Violet holding desperately, King Moulton drops back and punts the water soaked pigskin a good fifty yards down to the Violet's eight yard mark. "Seven more minutes," says a fan, "That break their hearts!"

Big Ben immediately punts back and Nebraska gains fifteen yards on the exchange. Their ball on N.Y.U.'s forty-three yard mark. Some of the less enduring of the eighty-five thousand commence leaving the stands. The weather has been unrelenting and, with the creeping on of dusk, there's a penetrating rawness added to the air. The Violet team, despairing of victory, is fighting only to preserve that intangible thing called honor. And the N.Y.U. rooters, as a symbol of loyalty, are sticking to the last.

"Time out!" Big Ben Ferdy is hurt. Caught under a jam in stopping a plunge of King Moulton's. He's stretched out in the mud and water right along the sidelines with an injury to his head.

"Oh, Bennie! Bennie!" cries a voice.

As they lift the Violet's big fullback to his feet and walk him around, he rolls his head on his shoulders, then shakes himself loose and turns to see who's calling him.

"Maizy!" he says, his face lighting up. And before anyone can stop him he's stumbled over the sidelines to the field box.

"Bennie!" gasps the girl who's never taken her eyes off him from the start of play, "You all right?"

"Sure, I—I'm all right."

He's a frightful looking mess, almost more mud than man, and he's been anything but the terrific line plunger today . . . stopped dead by a Cornhusker line that's kicked him back like the recoil from a small cannon.

"Well, then Bennie," says Maizy, biting her lips and looking at him simply, "Isn't it about time you were pulling that Umbrella formation?"

Big Ben stares at her dazedly, and his mouth sags open.

"That *what*?"

"Or haven't you got any umbrellas?" Maizy continues.

A man in the chair next to her laughs harshly.

"Beautiful and dumb!" he remarks.

But Big Ben's eyes are opening up now with the force of an idea. The haze is clearing. He glances around at his team-mates—a grim, worn, spiritless bunch—and the referee, making for him.

"No, Maizy, that's the trouble. No umbrellas. What do you say to lending me yours?"

"Oh, Bennie! How thrilling! My *Violet* one!"

Maizy hands it over proudly, exposing herself to the rain, and Big Ben turns from the box, side-stepping the referee who grabs at him, to run out onto the field before the still close to eighty-five thousand spectators.

"He's gone cuckoo!" yells a spectator. "That rap on the head . . . !"

But Big Ben knows what he's doing. He waves the umbrella over his head and begins calling to Russ, Steve and Wild Bill to come get under it. In the twinkling of an owl's eye the Violet stands are 'on' and there's a barrage of umbrellas come flying out onto the field for all the world like a straw hat shower at a late autumn baseball game.

"Oh, oh, folks!" shouts Graham, over the microphone, "If I told you what's happening now you wouldn't believe me!"

In no time at all Russ and Steve and Wild Bill and other team members are carrying um-

brellas in each hand . . . and grinning. They've come to life again. A tremendous howl of laughter goes the rounds as the Nebraska crowd looks on half-bewildered. And the N.Y.U. cheering section comes up on its feet with a roar, every umbrella waving frantically. To top it all off a quick-witted cheer leader soon has the crowd singing, "Let A Smile Be Your Umbrella On A Rainy, Rainy Day!"

Try to restore order after this. The referee twice penalizes N.Y.U. five yards for delaying the game, putting the ball on the Violet's thirty-one yard line, a first down for Nebraska. And after all the umbrellas are cleared from the field and the game resumed, with Coach Durgan rushing in some fresh linesmen, there's a fumble on the first play, Russ Stout recovering for N.Y.U.

"Yea, team! Yea! Yea! Yea!" booms the Violet stands.

A triple pass behind the line, dangerous with a slippery ball, but fingers clutching the pigskin in desperate frenzy . . . and Big Ben as the ball carrier, sliding off around the end in the gathering darkness. The interference that

forms around him, falls away, and magically forms again! Finally Big Ben, heavy-footed, plowing on alone, straight-arming a would-be tackler, slipping to his knees . . . up again . . . on . . . on . . . and over the line for the longest run of the game and a . . . "TOUCHDOWN!" Nebraska groans as the lurching Violet fullback hastily attempts a place-kicked extra point and misses.

Score: Nebraska, 14; N.Y.U. 9.

"Folks, this a ball game!" broadcasts Graham, "You get what I mean? A *ball* game! But it's too late, though . . . too late. N.Y.U. should have started earlier. I've never seen anything like it. I don't think Phil has either. Never! Not even in California! Ha! Ha! Ha! Big Ben's got going now. Oh, what a marvelous run he made! Knee deep in mud most of the way. Ow, my voice! Sort of cracked, isn't it? And I'm supposed to sing tomorrow night. That's a joke! Hello! There go the exit lights on in the stadium so you may know she's getting dark. How much more time, Phil? . . . Three minutes? . . . Here they go . . . lining up . . . N.Y.U.'s gone

crazy . . . Ha! Ha! Phil says they've gone umbrella mad. Can you hear me? I can't even hear myself. Maybe it's a good thing. . . . All right . . . the kick-off . . . Nebraska receiving. . . ah, a fumble! . . . the ball is down . . . Nebraska's ball on her own . . . let's see . . . you can hardly make it out from here . . . her own twelve yard line!"

On the first attempted play the N.Y.U. line is through to drop the man with the ball for a four yard loss. The Nebraska quarterback, playing safe, immediately orders a punt. No use taking chances with the game so far gone and a Violet machine suddenly risen to its crest of power. King Moulton, outstanding star of the day, stands on his own goal line and holds out mud-grimed hands for the ball, grinning defiance at his foes. Single-handed he is defeating N.Y.U. and this punt is to be his finishing touch.

"Block that kick!" intreats the Violet in a frenzied chant.

The ball snaps back and the opposing lines meet in a great, upheaving mass. The Corn-husker's line wavers, then buckles, and dirt-

blackened forms leap through, over the struggling figures of their team-mates. Foremost among those through the line is a man whom papers have heralded as an All-American possibility. A mighty leap and he is facing his greatest rival for that honor. King Moulton side-steps the terrifying charge of his enemy . . . and kicks. But Big Ben, falling sidewise, blocks the phizzing pigskin with his chest. The ball, rebounding, rolls over the goal line. And in the now lowered dusk, Russ and Steve, each unable to recognize the other, dive for the pigskin and clutch it madly, being almost instantly crushed into the mud by an avalanche of frantic Corn-huskers.

"It's over! It's over!" cried a hysterical voice.

But no one can really tell until the referee, throwing himself into the tangled mass, digs deep down and gets his hands on the pigskin, which is still held in a death grip by the two forms on the bottom, who're both practically out. The referee rolls 'em over and takes a close look at 'em because he can't tell by the condition of their togs what team they're from.

Then he raises his arm in token of a touchdown and the Yankee Stadium vibrates with sound. The din is so terrific that nobody hears the timer's whistle blow, ending the game . . . and it's not until substitutes come sliding through the mud to welcome their tired teammates, that the great crowd realizes the game is over. There's no attempt made to kick the point after touchdown. It's not needed, for one thing, and there's too many joy-crazed spectators swarming onto the field, for another. An extremely dazed scorekeeper, pinches himself in several places before daring to put up the final score.

N. Y. U. 15
NEBRASKA 14

"And I can't believe it yet!" he says, as he looks up at it.

"It's a miracle, folks! A miracle!" raves Graham MacNamee, "I'm soaking wet . . . my voice is gone . . . collar, too . . . but what of it? N.Y.U. won a ball game . . . and SUCH a ball game! Believe you me! And, oh, yes! They won the national football

championship. We mustn't forget that! Is everybody happy? Well, everybody but Nebraska and they're still trying to figure out how it happened. But I can tell 'em right now that nobody'll ever know. It just happened, that's all . . . and I don't mean maybe! Oh, say—you ought to see those Violet rooters now! They're splashing out into this football lake here . . . Isn't that what you'd call it, Phil? Ha! Ha! Phil says it reminds him of Muscle Shoals. Just why I don't know. But, anyhow, they're snake dancing through the lake and swimming toward the Nebraska goal posts. And what are they going to do to 'em? One guess! Heigh-ho! Here they come . . . right up by the roots! The posts, I mean! Oh, yes! Ha! Ha! . . . Phil says if you want a good pair of rubbers, now's the time to get 'em. They're being sucked off by the dozens out here. And rain! Say, how it's coming down now! But who cares? Listen to the band! The N.Y.U. crowd have got hold of Big Ben Ferdy and they're carrying him around the field. He's trying to get away . . . but not a chance! Oh, boy! There's going to be a big time in this

man's town tonight! But not for me. I've had my big time this afternoon. If I had to walk out of here on my tonsils right this minute, I'd drop dead...."

In the clubhouse a delirious bunch of badly fagged warriors are trying to get back their natural complexions under the showers. Coach "Hardboiled" Durgan stamps in, dripping wet, and looks gruffly over the squad.

"Where's Bennie?" he demands.

"Here, sir!" answers the big fullback, stepping kind of sheepishly from behind a locker.

The coach gives him the critical up and down.

"Where's your girl?" he snaps.

Big Ben, face sobering, saunters over.

"What's wrong? What's she done now?"

Coach Durgan grins.

"Nothing," he comes back, "I just want to give the kid a kiss!"

"No you don't!" retorts Big Ben, then, in a condescending tone, "I'll kiss her for you!"

And later, on the way home, under a Violet umbrella . . . oh, well . . . the story has been told!

POLLY GETS A FOOTBALL

POLLY GETS A FOOTBALL

To SECURE the football he wanted, Irving Bowers needed two more dollars. And to secure the two dollars, Irving needed a job.

Living on the top floor of a fifth story apartment house in New York, Irving wasn't able to run next door and ask Mrs. Brown if she wouldn't like to have her lawn mowed or her woodpile put in or her front porch washed. Lawns and woodpiles and front porches just didn't exist and, worse than that, the little odd jobs that a fellow might get to do—grown folks made a specialty of.

Irving had thought of earning the money by taking a pail and a scrubbing cloth and going through the apartment building, ringing doorbells, and asking "Windows washed, please?" But there was a colored man who made the rounds regularly and everybody saved their dirty windows up for him.

"No use," thought Irving, disconsolately, after considering every possible source of in-

come, "It's harder for a fellow to earn two dollars in New York than ten any place else!"

But just at that moment the doorbell sounded and Irving, answering, found himself confronted by the queer Mrs. Pendergast who lived on the same floor. She had become known to the Bowers because of her borrowing nature . . . a pinch of salt, an egg, a half cup of milk . . . oh, dear—the ice man had missed her that morning—couldn't Mrs. Bowers please put her pint of milk in her ice box for the day?

"Yes, ma'am?" said Irving, a trifle coldly, wondering what it was Mrs. Pendergast wanted to borrow now.

"Well, well!" chirped Mrs. Perdergast, in her high-pitched voice, "You're just the person I want to see. Would you like a job?"

Irving's eyes widened and his manner changed. Would he like a job? He'd tell the world!

"My daughter, Florence, and I are going away over the week-end," enlightened Mrs. Pendergast, "And we need someone to look after Floyd while we're gone."

Oh, yes! Floyd! Who, in that part of the

apartment house didn't know of Floyd? No, not a goldfish—a parrot! The bird that had caused tenants to threaten to move out, whose shrill and incessant jabbering had all but made a nervous wreck of the man below who worked nights and tried to sleep days. A bird that several tenants had threatened to shoot on sight or feed poisoned crackers if they ever got the chance.

"Why . . . er . . ." hesitated Irving, "What would I have to do?"

"Just come in morning and night and see that Floyd has his food and drink," explained Mrs. Pendergast, "And also give him a few minutes' airing."

"What do you mean—'airing'?" asked Irving, warily.

"Oh, just open the window near him," said Mrs. Pendergast, "So he can inhale a couple breaths of good outdoor air. But be careful you don't allow any direct draft on him."

"Sure, I'd be careful about that," assured Irving.

"Well, I thought you would. I told my daughter, Florence . . . I said, there's some-

thing about that Bowers boy . . . he's not harem skarem like other boys . . . he can be trusted. We can leave Floyd with him and feel perfectly safe!" Irving blushed a deep red.

"Thank you, ma'am," he managed.

"And now about the price," cooed Mrs. Pendergast, "Do you think two dollars is enough?"

"It's just right!" Irving answered, impulsively. Wow! Talk about an answer to his prayer! Two dollars! That football!

"That's fine," replied Mrs. Pendergast, backing toward her door, "Now, Mr. Bowers, would you mind coming over a minute and meeting Floyd? I want you to get acquainted with him as I couldn't get him to stay with a stranger!"

Irving grinned. Sure he'd come over. He'd put up with a lot of Mrs. Pendergast's funny whims for two dollars! After all it would be pretty soft work . . . perhaps half an hour a day all told . . . Saturday and Sunday. And the gang just had to have a new pigskin!

At the door the two were met by Mrs. Pendergast's maidenly daughter, Florence.

"Florence, dear, this is the Bowers boy. Is Floyd so he can be seen?"

"Oh, yet indeedy! He's wide awake and acting just like he's expecting company. I've already told him who we were trying to get to take care of him and he's just *too* curious! Cranes his neck every time he hears a noise in the next room!"

Irving blinked at this, but—business was business and two dollars was two dollars. He'd never had the pleasure of so much as seeing Floyd but he'd heard plenty of him! And now he was privileged to hear some more . . . Mrs. Pendergast's high-pitched voice . . . !

"Who is it? Who is it? Who is it?"

"Sssh! Floyd!" called the actual owner of the voice, going ahead of Irving, "Let me go in first. You see Floyd's our protector. He's been trained to scream for help every time a stranger enters unless we explain to him that the stranger is all right!"

Irving nodded.

"You'll *love* Floyd," promised Florence, beamingly, "He's a regular 'watch bird' . . . that's what he is . . . "

Taking hold Irving's arm, Mrs. Pendergast's daughter ushered the fellow who was to be **the** parrot's valet, into the room.

"Here, Floyd . . . let me present Mr. Bowers . . . Mr. Bowers, this is Floyd."

"Pleased to meet you," said Floyd, much **to** Irving's astonishment.

"Some bird!" he said, and meant it.

"Now, now! Mustn't say nice things about Floyd to his face," cautioned Mrs. Pendergast, "We don't want to spoil him, do we, Floyd? Not muchums!"

"Not muchums!" repeated Floyd, shifting about on his make-shift standard which resembled the limb of a tree.

"What's to prevent Floyd from going all over the house?" asked Irving, noting the absence of cage and fastenings and the profusion of seeds and other litter under the standard.

"Oh," said Florence, "Floyd's a perfect gentleman. He knows just what's expected of him . . . and he never, *never* leaves his perch. We leave him in his corner in the kitchen for days at a time."

"That's fine," replied Irving, relieved, "**I**

just didn't want you folks to be coming home and finding the house all cluttered up with bird seed and cracker crumbs."

"No need to worry about that," said Mrs. Pendergast, giving Floyd her finger to chew upon, "Step over closer, Mr. Bowers. See how friendly and loving Floyd is?"

Irving watched the parrot holding Mrs. Pendergast's finger gently in his bill. He put his own finger up and Floyd promptly nipped it.

"Yes, I see how loving he is," he said glancing at a cut place on his finger, ruefully.

"Why, Floyd! Shame on you!" scolded Florence, "This is the nicey mans who's going to take care of you while we're gone!"

"Don't care! Don't care!" snapped Floyd, prunning himself in an offhanded manner.

"Floyd!" reprimanded Mrs. Pendergast.

"Arabella!" rejoined Floyd.

"Isn't he cute?" smiled Florence, "He always does that when mother reproves him. That's mother's given name!"

"I've really got to be going," said Irving, "I guess Floyd and I are acquainted enough.

Now all you want me to do is to feed and water him and give him air?"

"That's all," beamed Mrs. Pendergast, "And here's the key so you can get in when you want to . . . and I'll have the food right out here for you. Be sure not to give him more than seventeen sunflower seeds night and morning. I've found if he eats more than that—it interferes with his digestion."

"Yes, ma'am," agreed Irving. Then to himself, "Good gosh, I can see now where this job's going to be worth two dollars easy! Besides, that bird's taken a personal dislike to me and he'd just as soon bite a couple of good-sized hunks out of me as not . . . If I'd give him the chance. Oh, boy—I don't even know whether I want to be in this apartment alone with him!"

But Irving had made the bargain and, after all, as he had reflected before—two dollars was two dollars!

The Pendergasts, mother and daughter, after an affectionate farewell, departed in full faith that Floyd was being left in good hands. They departed Friday evening with the promise

to be back late Sunday night, which meant that Irving's duties began Saturday morning.

"Well, I wonder how and where I'm going to find you?" said Irving, a trifle nervously, as he slipped the key in the lock and opened the door, guardedly, "You may be a gentleman and stay where you're put . . . but I'm going to be darn sure! No jumping out at me unawares. And please remember, I'm no stranger. I'm the nicey mans that's come to give you your breakfast."

"Arabella!" came a high-pitched voice from the kitchen.

"Floyd!" replied Irving, peering into the kitchen, stealthily, "How are you, old scout? Hungry?"

The parrot cocked what looked to be a suspicious eye at him and lurched upon his perch as though he were about to fly. Irving instinctively ducked.

"Hold her!" he ordered, "Good night! This kitchen is a sight. You've thrown seeds all over the place. What a gentleman you are—not! Why should I give you seventeen more seeds this morning when you didn't eat the

seventeen seeds Mrs. Pendergast gave you last night?"

"Don't care! Don't care!" answered Floyd.

"And how the dickens am I going to get past that perch to open the window without risking my life?" Irving asked himself, "Floyd's a good 'watch bird' all right . . . he hasn't taken his eyes off me since I've come in the room. I don't like that. Here, Floyd—here's your breakfast . . . and here's your water! Wow!"

Floyd, making a sudden lurch forward, just missed clipping Irving's ear as he knelt down to fill the water pan.

"See here, Floyd—be reasonable! Would you bite the hand that feeds you?"

"Don't care! Don't care!" said Floyd.

"But *I* care!" retorted Irving, "And, if you'd ask me I think you've got enough fresh air in here till tonight."

"Not muchums!" said Floyd.

"Maybe not muchums, but enough!" insisted Irving, "Now ta! ta! you old roughneck. Behave yourself!"

"Arabella!" cried Floyd, in evident distress.

That evening Irving was forced to nerve himself to enter the apartment. The care of Floyd had been on his mind all day. He had thought of the bird far more than two dollars' worth.

"Gee, I couldn't stand the responsibility of this job more'n a week-end," Irving told himself as he punched on the light in the hall and crept toward the kitchen.

"Who is it? Who is it?" came the voice, with startling shrillness.

"The nicey mans again," responded Irving, "Now be good, Floyd, because I got to get past your perch and open that window."

The kitchen window, poking out upon the court, commanded a view of the rear of other apartments on three sides. The window also opened out upon a fire escape.

Watching his chance, Irving ducked quickly and jumped past Floyd, making a grab for the window and pulling it down about four inches from the top. But his rushing past had excited Mrs. Pendergast's man Friday and Floyd, with a shrill cry, flapped his wings violently. Thinking that he was about to be attacked, Irv-

ing covered his head with his arms, bent over and squirmed from the corner, leaving the window open.

"Not for five times two dollars!" said Irving, from the kitchen doorway, "That air won't hurt you any. I'll get a long pole and close the window tomorrow. Floyd, you're a mean old boy, and I'm here to say that Mrs. Pendergast and her darling daughter are perfectly safe while you're around!"

"Now, now!" said Floyd, in Mrs. Pendergast's best reprimanding tone.

Irving's bedroom, it so happened, also looked out upon the court, and from it he could almost look in the Pendergasts' kitchen window. Although he said nothing to his folks, the job of looking after Floyd had commenced to weigh heavily upon him. So heavily, in fact, that he couldn't even drop to sleep without seeing green feathers bristling at him and hearing a muddle of "Dcn't cares," "Arabellas" and "Who is its."

"Boy, when Sunday night comes and I get my two dollars," mumbled Irving, turning over restlessly. "Never again! . . . Never a. . . .!"

A sudden clamorous noise in the court brought him to full consciousness. He sat upright in bed, rubbed his eyes, and listened, tensely. Excited voices outside, windows being raised, a dog's barking.

"What was that?" Irving heard some one ask.

"Sounded like someone crying for help," said another.

Looking out Floyd saw lights flashing on in various apartments. Then came the sound again which had aroused sleepers on the court.

"Help! Help! . . . Burglars! Help!"

A woman's voice, frenzied, terrified, high pitched.

"My jiminy!" exclaimed Irving. "Sounds like it's coming from that apartment on the second floor. Why, folks just moved in there less than two weeks ago!"

"Somebody call the police!" cried a tenant across the court.

"What apartment number?" asked another.

"Apartment B-two," furnished Irving.

Sounds of a commotion below, voices—angry voices—and another frenzied cry. "Help, Burglars! Help! H-E-L-P!"

A police whistle commenced blowing. The court was now a jumble of excited sound. An auto pulled up in the alley . . . footsteps came pounding over the paved courtway . . . a flashlight played up against the apartment house.

"Where's the trouble?" shouted a voice.

Irving, looking down, glimpsed a policeman. The copper was soon joined by three others.

"B-two!" called Irving, and saw one policeman boost another up on the fire escape.

Then came the voice again—the voice of a woman in peril. "Help! Burglars! . . . H-e-l-p! . . . Don't care! . . . Don't care!"

Irving's eyes bulged. He gave a glance at the Pendergasts' kitchen window with its slit open at the top. . . . the fire escape underneath . . . and the apartment where the sounds of trouble were coming from . . . on the second floor.

"Oh, my gosh!" he groaned, and grabbed wildly for his clothes.

Irving reached the second floor landing just as policemen came from apartment B-2 leading three men and a woman, all handcuffed. And the last policeman, bringing up the rear, carried an unruly parrot on his arm.

"This bird ought to be in chains, too," said the officer, "He darn near bit my finger off!"

"S-say," broke in Irving, fearlessly, "I—I'm sorry to have caused all this mess but, if you please, sir—that's my parrot . . . at least, it was left in my charge!"

"What?" The policemen stopped and stared at Irving in amazement.

"His name's Floyd," continued Irving, "And he. . . ."

"Pleased to meet you," said Floyd, obligingly.

"There's really no burglars," exclaimed Irving, "Mrs. Pendergast, who owns Floyd, told me she'd trained him to scream for help the minute he met up with strangers . . . and that's what Floyd's been doing. You see, Mrs. Pendergast's away and I've been taking care of Floyd and I left the window open and Floyd . . . well, he went visiting . . . "

The police lieutenant, following Irving's story intently, laughed.

"That's a good one!" he rejoined, greatly amused, "But don't you think for one minute, son, that this bird doesn't know real burglars when he meets 'em. These folks here are the

leaders in a fur-stealing ring that we've been on the trail of for a long time. And, if Floyd hadn't set up a holler when he wandered into their apartment off the fire escape . . . we probably wouldn't have found 'em."

Irving glanced at the glowering culprits unbelievably.

"You don't say!" he exclaimed, frankly dazed.

The lieutenant took him by the arm and walked him to one side.

"Listen, son, there's a reward of five hundred been offered by the Furriers Union for capture of this gang and I figure you're entitled to half of it."

"But—but I didn't do anything!" protested Irving.

"You left the window open, didn't you?" grinned the lieutenant, "Here, George, give the kid back his parrot."

"Er . . . a . . . if it's just the same to you," hedged Irving, "He seems to be peaceable right now. Would you mind carrying him up to the fifth floor and putting him back in the apartment for me?"

"Sure!" responded the policeman, oblig-

ingly, "Me and this bird's great pals now—ain't we, Fido?"

"Floyd!" screamed the bird.

"My mistake," said the copper, following Irving up the stairs.

"Ask for me at the station house Monday morning," called the lieutenant after Irving, "My name's Hoffman."

"Yes, sir," replied Irving, "Thank you very much!"

Five hundred dollars! Two-hundred-fifty of it coming to him! Quite a profitable job for over the week-end. What would Mrs. Pendergast say? Oh, well—she ought to be glad to know that Floyd had ridded the apartment house of thieves. As for his football—how many dozen of them did he want? Why—he could outfit the whole team so that they'd look like a real eleven instead of just a sandlot gang! And since he was captain and star player, it was up to him to do something for the fellows . . . !

Elatedly closing the window and locking it, Irving watched from the kitchen doorway as the policeman put Floyd back on his perch.

"He seems to have more respect for an officer of the law, I don't dare get near him."

The policeman nodded, amused.

"He's a wise bird, that 'un! He started actin' up fresh at the start but the minute he lamped my billy he piped down!"

"Polly wants a cracker!" said Floyd, mournfully.

Irving, on his way out, turned back and looked about the kitchen. On a shelf he saw a tin box with the lettering "Crackers."

"Well, Floyd, Mrs. Pendergast didn't say anything about this but, at the risk of ruining your digestion, I'm going to give you some!"

Suiting the action to the word, Irving took down the box, removed three crackers and tossed them within reach of Floyd.

"There you are—that's your reward!" he said, and grinned as Floyd gobbled the crackers up. "Say, old boy—how'd you like to be mascot of our football team?"

Floyd turned his head sidewise and cocked one eye. Cracker crumbs dropped on the floor. And then, as if fully comprehending, the parrot brought a laugh from Irving with the half-choked but enthusiastic answer: "Very muchums!"

NUMBER "23"

NUMBER "23"

"Vic's out of the big game!"

The news traveled throughout Northrop High like a flash of lightning and brought a shock to all who heard it.

Vic out? Why, he was Northrop's triple threat man—the fellow upon whom high hopes had been placed of his eleven's downing the mighty DeLand. Big Vic Latham had run wild through all opposition to give Northrop an unbroken string of victories for the most successful football season in the history of the school. To lose his services now, on the eve of the year's biggest contest, was a crushing blow.

"How do you know he's out?" persisted a dubious student, "Maybe it's just a piece of strategy Coach Tudor's pulling!"

"Not a chance," came a gloomy reply, "Vic got a busted nose last night in scrimmage and a wrenched knee. You won't see old 'twenty-three' in there tomorrow."

"Then it's goodbye game," said a third, in even deeper dejection, "DeLand was scared stiff of Vic. See what the DeLand papers have been saying about the special defense their team had built up to stop him? They'll murder us now!"

In the Northrop High locker room where the squad was gathered for light signal practice, much the same opinion prevailed. With Vic Latham in the line-up, fellow team-mates had radiated confidence. He had been the backbone of their offense. Opposing teams, keeping frantic eyes on the Northrop flash had made a marked man of number "23" and, in trying to stop Vic, had laid themselves open for deceptive formations in which other backfield players had carried the ball, getting away for long gains.

"We couldn't have done it by ourselves," said Benny Deacon, left half, "We needed Vic in there for the threat."

"You tell 'em!" agreed Carl Bentley, right half, "All Vic had to do was show his red head and the game was in the bag."

"Some break, this is!" lamented Shrimp Corcoran, quarterback, "Last game of the season.

Last game old Vic was to play for Northrop. And the game we need to win the championship!"

Here was a situation to ponder over. The loss of red-headed Vic Latham to the team was enough to turn Coach Tudor white-headed. He had secured astonishing results from a group of boys who, in themselves, represented only average material, simply by clustering them about a stick of human dynamite who went tearing down the field on rocketing runs to produce the touchdowns needed for victory. With Vic, admittedly, Northrop was a great eleven; without him, Northrop was just a team.

"Oh, for another red-head!" sighed the coach, and paced across the locker room floor.

"A . . . Coach Tudor!" called a hesitant voice.

The football mentor whirled about. Pete Elkins, substitute linesman and clown of the squad, confronting him, sober-faced.

"What is it?"

"I was just thinking," answered Pete, haltingly, "This is just an idea, of course . . . but, you know, everybody seems to think I can act

. . . the way they're after me to take part in school plays . . . ”

“Well, what of it?” Coach Tudor regarded Pete with a trace of suspicion. He was in no mood for jesting and the substitute was one who was not to be taken seriously. His presence on the squad was more in tribute to his persistence in trying for the team the past three years and the spirit of fun he radiated which kept the fellows in good humor. But Northrop needed more than a wit to bolster up morale now.

“Suppose you’re thinking of putting on an act for the boys?” snapped the coach, as Pete’s face flushed.

“No, sir,” replied the substitute, “But I *was* thinking of maybe putting on an act for DeLand!”

Coach Tudor stiffened.

“You—what?”

Fellow team-mates gathered about, interestedly. What was Pete going to spring now? Poor headwork if he’d picked a time like this for any funny business.

“It’s just this, Coach,” said Pete, apologeti-

cally, "You see I'm pretty close to Vic in size even though I don't have his red hair . . . but if I wore his jersey and taped up my face good so I couldn't be recognized . . . well, I might be able to put the act over."

Mouths opened wide in astonishment. No wise crack here, instead—perhaps a wise idea! Team members glanced at Coach Tudor testily. What would Coach think of this—coming from the clown?

"Hmmm!" mused Coach Tudor, rubbing a spot behind his ear, "Hmmm! . . . Not so bad! Pete, you've got a brain!"

"Thank you, sir," grinned the substitute linesman, "I'm glad that's no longer in doubt, anyhow."

"But you've never played the backfield," considered the Coach, "You might be able to look like Vic all right but could you . . . ?"

"I don't figure I'd have to do much more than look like him," explained the team jester, "Just so DeLand's watching every move I make and is expecting me to carry the ball every play . . . that ought to give Carl and Benny and Shrimp the chance to get away!"

Coach Tudor grunted, then resumed his packing, a characteristic habit of his when under pressure. Members of the squad returned to their dressing, preparatory to taking the field for private signal practice. None ventured comment but many exchanged hopeful glances.

"All right, gang!" decided the Coach, "We're accepting Pete's suggestion. He plays in Vic's shoes tomorrow and, so far as any of you fellows know, he *is* Vic. To make DeLand swallow this deception we've got to keep absolutely mum."

"And my make-up's got to be absolutely perfect," added Pete, "I'd better rehearse it tonight . . . getting used to playing with a broken nose and a bum knee."

"Right!" assented Coach Tudor, "Shrimp, see how much of Pete's face you can bandage and still leave peep holes for his eyes. Don't overdo it, of course, but plaster him up enough so its hard to make out his features. Carl, you're elected to do the kicking tomorrow. Vic's bad knee lets him out. He's really only playing on his grit . . . just so you guys can get the benefit of DeLand's knowing he's in there. As for you,

Pete, here's the chance of a life time to prove whether or not you're a great actor. This isn't any comedy role. It's a regular Hamlet. But the way you play it is going to decide what kind of a show we put up against DeLand. You've got ten players in your supporting cast, though, who are going to play the game of their lives . . . so, if you can make DeLand accept you as the one and only Vic Latham . . . you can count on your fellow players turning in an all-star performance. What d'ya say, boys?"

"Yea!" came the answering shout, surest barometer of all that Northrop's fighting morale had been restored.

The Northrop *Morning News*, published the morning of the game, carried a sport headline which brought cheers from followers of the team, and groans from arriving DeLand rooters.

NUMBER "23" PLAYS
To Enter Big Game
Swathed in Bandages

"What did we tell you?" reiterated one who had not believed first reports of Vic's removal,

"Take more than a broken nose and a trick knee to keep Vic out of this battle. Just a fast one Coach Tudor was pulling on DeLand."

"Vic's hurt all right," insisted another, "I was over at his house last evening and he wouldn't say then whether he was going to play or not. Looked pretty bad to me . . . what I could see of him. The Doc's got his face done up like a mummy's."

"That's all right," joshed the other, "Vic could go through most teams blindfolded and he's faster on one leg than most guys are on two!"

The biggest crowd ever to witness a football game at Northrop field was present that afternoon. It marked the first time a Northrop High team had qualified for a chance at championship honors and Northrop supporters were making the most of it. DeLand, however, had won so many championships that their winning had become an old story. But, by the same token, DeLand was intensely jealous of her reputation. It had taken plenty of fight and power to traditionally hold sway over rivals in her section of the state and this year had been no exception. Not often that two teams battled right down to

the final game of their schedules undefeated. The showing of Northrop had been the surprise feature of the season. Northrop—a school which had submitted readily enough in years before—now, largely due to the performance of one man, actually disputing DeLand's claim to the title! . . . But their star would be playing under wraps today, probably just a shadow of himself.

"Stop Vic Latham and you stop Northrop!" was DeLand's battle cry. Cripple or no cripple, the Northrop fullback was a player to be watched.

"Where's Pete Elkins?" demanded Coach Tudor as the Northrop squad was about to take the field, an excited din raging outside, fans clustered around the locker room door, players nervously fingering at shoe laces—the atmosphere fairly tingling with suspense.

"Pete Elkins?" The name was repeated, team members looking at one another, blankly.

"Pete's not showed up yet," announced Shrimp, "You came past his house, Vic. You see anything of him?"

The figure with the heavily bandaged face

and the closely drawn headgear, shook his head.

"Not me. Pete was going to wait on me, too. Least that's what he said. When I didn't see him I figured he'd gone on."

"Find out what's happened to him, Eddie," directed Coach Tudor of Eddie Dunn, trainer, "All right, you guys! Everybody out! And remember—you're coming back here at the half *in the lead!*"

The appearance of the Northrop High eleven was the signal for a terrific outburst of sound from the home stands. And all eyes sought out a certain famous figure in the backfield who limped along with his comrades, face obscured by gauze and adhesive tape but recognizable through his tattered jersey bearing the magic numerals "23."

"Yea, Vic!" boomed the stands, "Yea! Yea! Yea!"

And DeLand, looking on, studied the limp anxiously, wondering just how much it would hamper the big fellow's play.

"It's his kicking leg!" said one, "He won't do any punting today, that's sure!"

"Yes, but he seems to get around fairly fast

on it," observed a second DeLand rooter, uneasily.

The referee's whistle sent substitutes scurrying to the sidelines and caused the elevens to form in two knots on the field for the brief moment prior to the starting of the game. Captains Swede Hansen, DeLand star, and Vic Latham met in the center of the field to toss for choice of goal or kick-off. And during their meeting a Northrop team looked on, almost breathlessly.

"First act's started," grinned Shrimp, "Say, doesn't Pete make a dead ringer of Vic from here? He's got Vic's stride down pat and that make-up! Gee, it's too bad Vic himself can't see it!"

"You can bet your life he'll be hearing all about it on the radio," assured Carl, "Listening to the runs he makes . . . and the passes . . ."

"Here's hoping," said Shrimp, "We'll have to use Pete once and awhile to make it look real . . . and I'm afraid right there is where his acting's going to stop!"

"Thing for us to do is go after DeLand hard, get the advantage before they get wise, and then

fight to hold it!" stressed Benny, for the nth time.

The others nodded grimly.

"Sorry you're so bunged up," Captain Hansen was saying to one whom he regarded as rival Captain Latham, while the two shook hands.

"Oh, I'm not so 'bunged' up as I look," answered the fellow who was playing the part, quite truthfully.

The referee juggled a coin in his hand.

"Heads or tails?" he asked of Vic.

"Heads."

"You lose," the referee announced as he deftly tossed the coin, caught it and opened his hand. "What'll it be, Hansen,—goal or kick-off?"

"We'll take the wind at our backs," replied Swede, choosing the west end of the field.

"Then we'll receive the kick-off," decided the rival captain his voice muffled.

The two returned to their respective teams with varying reports, Captain Hansen declaring that Vic didn't look so bad close-up and admonishing his team-mates to 'nail him every chance they got'; while the purported Vic, grinning

under his wealth of bandages, said simply, "So far so good. I've a strong hunch, guys, that I'm going to make a great hit in this part!"

And then, while the real Vic Latham, his painfully wrenched knee carefully pillowed on a chair in front of him, leaned forward to catch every word of the radio announcer, the referee's whistle screeched simultaneously with the plunking sound of toe meeting ball.

"A marvelous kick-off!" cried the announcer, "There it goes! Deep into Northrop territory! Wow! . . . There's old Vic limping under it! He's caught it . . . on about his seven yard line! . . . Look at the interference form, will you! . . . There's three DeLand men . . . tearing through . . . Vic's limping off to the side . . . bingo! Beautiful blocking! Shrimp spoiled a sure tackle that time . . . Say, Vic's certainly traveling for a man with a game leg! . . . Five . . . ten . . . fifteen . . . wonderful! . . . Side-stepped a DeLand tackler . . . oh, he's a slippery eel, that fellow! DeLand's too anxious to get him, that's the trouble . . . There's another tackler missed him! . . ."

Vic pounded his fist on the radio table.

"Go it, Pete, you old actor! Go it!" he rooted.

At mid-field a rampaging figure bearing the famed numeral, "23" on his back, was finally brought to earth with the crowd in a frenzy of excitement. Northrop team-mates dragged the battered looking star to his feet and hugged him joyously.

"Come on, gang!" shouted the fellow playing the part, "These guys are easy. We're going through for a touchdown!"

"There's just no stopping that Vic Latham once he gets under way," declared the radio announcer, "Northrop's got DeLand on the run already. They're lining up! . . . There they go . . . an end run . . . Vic carrying the ball . . . no! . . . The ball goes to Carl Bentley . . . it's a criss-cross . . . and Bentley's through the line . . . five . . . ten . . . twelve yards on the first play! . . . Oh, say! Is DeLand playing for Vic? . . . They tackled and threw him and he never touched the ball!"

The real Vic clenched his fist, grinning nervously.

"She's working!" he cried, "Pete, you're some

double! But, boy—what punishment you're going to take before this game's over!"

With all eyes on the supposed Vic Latham, Northrop's star fullback, a mad cheer went up as the pigskin was seen to go to him. It was Northrop's ball on DeLand's thirty-eight yard line but it would not be there for long. Northrop had thrown the mighty DeLand on the defensive at the very start of the game, thanks to Pete Elkins' run-back to midfield from kick-off and a twelve yard gain by Carl Bentley, right half.

"Go on, Vic!" cried Northrop rooters, as Pete hit the DeLand line. He advanced the ball a scant yard and DeLand supporters howled.

"That's stopping him!" shouted a rabid fan, "This Latham's not so much, gang!"

"He'd show you if he didn't have a game leg!" defended a Northrop adherent, "He's in there now when he ought to be on the sidelines and still he got away for forty yards at kick-off! What does he care for a busted nose and a bum leg? Wait till he really gets hurt and watch him play!"

Partisan loyalty, this! How the Northrop

fans idolized the fellow whose dazzling work at fullback had brought his team through the season undefeated with a chance at the championship against DeLand! Nothing was too good for Vic Latham and Vic Latham was just too good for all opposition! Certainly tough to see him out there, dragging one leg, his face swathed in bandages, but the shadow of his former self and yet that shadow mightily respected by the enemy!

Shrimp Corcoran, Northrop quarterback, having called on Pete to give DeLand a taste of 'Vic Latham', now slipped the ball to left half Benny Deacon and slapped him hard on the back as Benny went smashing through. DeLand watching every move of the fellow in the tattered jersey number "23". And Benny plunging for four yards!

"Third down, five to go!"

"Good boy, Benny!" cheered the crippled backfield star, "That's holding me up!" Pete winked behind his bandages.

"All right, gang! For Vic!" snapped Shrimp, and the line dug toes in the dirt, crashing forward as right half Bentley again took the

ball and dove through a hole opened up for him.

"Look at that Northrop backfield travel!" exclaimed a rooter, exultantly. "There's another first down! Ball on DeLand's twenty-eight yard line now. Touchdown, team! Touchdown!"

The Northrop stands came up on their feet with a roar as their much bandaged star, obviously being saved as much as possible, started around end with the pigskin. He limped as he ran but good interference blocked out the DeLand end and let him loose for a gain of seven yards.

"Yea, Vic!" boomed Northrop.

"Number "23" again!" raved the radio announcer, "But you folks listening in don't have to be told that! . . . Every time the crowd goes wild you can figure who's carrying the ball. Man, oh man! Is this Vic some player? . . ."

And the real Vic, propped up in his chair at home, gave joyous answer.

"I'll say *Pete's* some player!"

Elated at the ball-carrying success of the fellow acting the star's part, quarterback Corcoran called on Pete the very next play. This

time, however, Pete was slow in getting under way and DeLand smothered him for a two yard loss.

Staggering to his feet after the tackle, the supposed Vic asked for time out while he limped about in circles, favoring his injured knee.

Coach Tudor, apparently greatly concerned, dispatched trainer Eddie Dunn and the water boy to the star fullback's side while the Northrop crowd sat anxiously awaiting the outcome. Would Vic be able to continue in the game? Fellow players crowded about as DeLand team members looked on from a distance.

"Going to be able to stick it out?" asked Shrimp.

The star actor bent his knee testily, lips drawn tight.

"He's in bad shape," observed Captain Hansen of DeLand, to his team-mates. "Looks to me like he's about done."

But trainer Eddie, after a consultation, was seen to tape the knee even tighter, a certain indication that Vic Latham was staying in.

"Playing on his nerve!" said a spectator, hoarsely.

"Be careful, Pete," warned right half Bentley, in an undertone, "Don't overplay this hurt stuff. We don't want DeLand to figure you're all in . . . especially after the way you've been getting through."

"Should say not!" urged Shrimp, "You've been going great, Pete! Talk about acting the part—gosh! I don't see how Vic could be doing much better himself!"

"Your first time in the backfield, too!" whispered Benny Deacon, "Boy, I'm beginning to think you were miscast when coach put you in the line! You've belonged back here all the time!"

The referee's whistle brought an end to the 'time-out', sending the water boy and trainer Eddie scampering for the sidelines.

"Yea, Vic!" roared the stands, in tribute.

"Atta old red head!" shrieked an admirer.

The player receiving the ovation limped painfully back into position. He glanced at the stands with a half-grin. And a crazy paraphrase kept running through his head. "Once a linesman, always a linesman!" . . . The crowd rarely, if ever, went wild over any man on the line. Not that a fellow played for cheers . . .

but Pete could readily imagine now—if he were actually Vic—that the support the crowd was giving him would carry a thrill. It did even now . . . a different sort of thrill. For the cheering told him unmistakably that he was playing Vic's part sufficiently well to be taken for Vic.

"Let Vic get the credit," Pete mumbled to himself, "Just so DeLand doesn't find me out!"

Third down, Northrop's ball on DeLand's twenty-three yard line, five yards to go.

Shrimp Corcoran took the ball himself this time and managed three yards around left end. Last down and two!

"Give it to Vic!" howled Northrop.

But Shrimp was taking no chances on his green backfield man on a last down. A delayed pass behind the line with Bentley on the receiving end, was good for four yards and Northrop's third successive first down as Number "23", hobbling along for interference, was sent spinning.

"Say, are they laying for Vic!" cried a fan, "Look how they spilled him!"

The Northrop star crawled to his feet slowly.

He was a marked man all right. DeLand was playing him for all it was worth. Covering him on every play. But, just so Carl and Benny and Shrimp were making their gains . . . he wasn't supposed to be much more than a familiar looking dummy . . . even though he might be getting the 'sawdust' knocked out of him in the bargain.

"Northrop's star fullback is tottering on his feet," reported the announcer, "But his presence in that line-up is giving the drive to his team. There's no question about that! And if DeLand doesn't brace pretty soon, Northrop's going to be over her goal line!"

Fourteen yards more! The real Vic Latham suffered torture as he sat, banked in pillows, at learning that 'he' had been thrown for a three yard loss. He heard the DeLand rooters cheer the tackler who had stopped 'him'. And he groaned as Benny, trying for a run around right end, was dropped after going but two yards. Third down, eleven to go! The DeLand defense had stiffened. Looked now as though it were going to turn Northrop's great drive back.

"Wish I could be in there!" he cried.

"Here it is!" came the announcer's voice, "A

triple pass behind the line! Oh, what a beauty! . . . Shrimp to Vic who starts to run with it and makes a lateral pass back to Bentley who shoots out around left end. He's still traveling . . . he's past DeLand's safety man . . . there he goes, over the goal—a touchdown!"

Such a burst of sound followed that the announcer's voice was completely drowned out and it was fully two minutes later that a highly excited Vic Latham learned Bentley had missed the kick after the touchdown, making the score, Northrop, 6; DeLand, 0.

"Great work, guys!" complimented the star actor, happily.

"Great work yourself!" retorted Shrimp.

Coach Tudor, grinning, immediately rushed Roxy Davis, Vic Latham's regular substitute, into the game. No use completely over-taxing Northrop's star with Northrop now in the lead.

"Ray, Vic! Ray! Ray! Ray!" yelled the Northrop stands as Pete Elkins limped to the sidelines.

The first quarter was almost over and Northrop, peped up by her early scoring against the mighty DeLand, presented a grim defensive.

So far the plan of battle had worked out to a "T". Now Northrop faced the even greater task of holding the advantage gained.

But, all through the remainder of the first half, the Northrop line, driven furiously into each play by the whip-lash tongue of quarterback Corcoran, hurled the DeLand offensive back, forcing the enemy to punt. And, while Northrop could not again develop a sustained attack, the team was able to keep the ball a safe distance from the Northrop goal.

"First half over!" cried the radio announcer, "And folks, it's been some terrific fight. The only difference between the two teams appears to be the difference between DeLand's star, Swede Hansen, and Northrop's triple threat man, Vic Latham. Swede hasn't been able to get going but Northrop was a house afire while the crippled Vic was in the game. And Coach Tudor is undoubtedly saving Vic in case he's needed for a second half punch!"

The real Vic Latham laughed at this and sank back upon his pillows to watch the clock and count off the fifteen minutes of the intermission before the start of the second half.

"If the fellows can just hold that lead!" he cried, "It's almost like asking the impossible but it looks to me like DeLand's getting stronger and we may not have a chance to score again!"

In the Northrop locker room fellow players fell upon the supposed Vic Latham with carefully guarded compliments: "Great going, Vic!" "How's that old leg feel?"

Coach Tudor, coming over, fairly hugged the heavily bandaged team member.

"Boy, what an act you're putting on!" he whispered, "If I hadn't been in on this little disguise you'd have had *me* fooled!"

"No kidding?" rejoined Pete, pleased.

"Especially that sore knee business," grinned the coach, "You pulled that to perfection!"

"Looked just like Vic the way you limped around," put in Shrimp.

"Glad of that," said Pete, and rubbed his knee tenderly, bringing a laugh.

Northrop entered the second half grimly determined to hold her powerful rival. And DeLand went back into the game with just as grim a determination to rout Northrop. To this end a smashing attack was unleashed with Cap-

tain Swede Hansen leading the assault. He knifed the ends and slashed through the line for short but sure gains. And, as DeLand gradually ate into Northrop territory, the home rooters grew more and more concerned.

"Put Vic back in!" pleaded a spectator.

"Yea!" shouted another, "We need Vic. He'll stop those babies!"

And, at last, near the end of the third quarter, Coach Tudor yielded to requests and sent a limping figure back into the game with DeLand in possession of a first down on Northrop's fourteen yard line.

"Here's where we even it up!" predicted a DeLand supporter.

But Northrop braced desperately. It seemed as though her morale picked up the moment Vic Latham re-entered the game. Swede Hansen was stopped for no gain on the first play. DeLand advanced only two the next. Again Swede was called upon. He darted around left end this time and the stands shrieked as they saw him to have a clear field except for Vic who limped frantically across in an effort to catch and down him.

"Oh, what a tackle!" cried the radio announcer, "Swede's down on Northrop's five yard line. Vic got him. Dove in under a straight arm. But it's laid him out. They're working over him now. He's had the wind knocked out of him. Swede's helping bring him to. There! Swede's just ripped Vic's headgear off to give more air . . . Hello! What's this?"

"Oh, my gosh!" groaned the real Vic from his propped up seat near the loud speaker, "The jig's up now!"

And so it proved. The quick-witted Swede Hansen took one look at the Northrop star's raven locks and let out a bewildered howl.

"Hey! What's wrong here? I thought Vic's hair was *red*?"

Reaching out quickly, the DeLand star tore a strip of adhesive tape from the supposed Vic Latham's face. The revelation was astounding.

"That's not Vic Latham!" declared another DeLand man, dazedly, "That's . . . he's nothing but a sub!"

"It's Pete Elkins!" announced the radio broadcaster, "The stands are laughing and ap-

plauding and giving Coach Tudor credit for pulling a slick piece of deception. But DeLand can't see the joke. Say, you should see that team lining up now. They know there's no Vic Latham in Northrop's backfield and are they mad? Oh, *are* they? There goes Swede Hansen right through for a touchdown on the very next play! . . . No holding 'em now! . . . The DeLand rooters are wild. Score's a tie, six to six . . . but it may not be long. If Swede can make the extra point. He DID! . . . DeLand takes the lead, seven to six and the third quarter's over! . . . They're changing ends of the field. Oh, what a game! . . . ”

The stands buzzed with comment over the sensational discovery that the figure everyone had thought to be Vic Latham was actually Pete Elkins. And, because of the local reputation Pete had as an actor, many wise cracks were hurled at him.

“Well, if there isn't Lon Chaney!” razzed a DeLand rooter. “But, brother—you'll have to represent the Four Horsemen of Notre Dame to beat us now! We're just naturally going to massacre you this quarter!”

"Funny thing," observed a Northrop fan, "Pete's still limping. No sense in his keeping up the imitation of Vic now."

"Coach ought to take him out!" cried another.

But Coach Tudor, eyes on the man who had given such a faithful reproduction of Northrop's star fullback, refused to remove Pete from the game.

"What? . . . Coach is keeping me in?" the substitute linesman asked of quarterback Corcoran, incredulously.

"He sure is!" rejoined Shrimp, "Giving you a chance to *play yourself* from now on!"

Pete gritted his teeth, glancing toward the DeLand team, lining up for kick-off. What DeLand wouldn't try to do to him after this! They'd been a little leary of the fellow they had thought was Vic . . . but with the illusion destroyed the jersey bearing Number "23" no longer carried a threat.

"I've got to make good!" Pete decided, "Whether I'm supposed to be any good or not!"

DeLand kicked off. Shrimp Corcoran caught the ball on his eleven yard line and, get-

ting off to a quick start, dodged and twisted his way back to Northrop's forty yard mark.

"Come on, gang! We'll show these guys we don't need Vic!" cried Shrimp, as the stands roared.

A changeable psychology but the sort needed to meet the situation. And when Shrimp followed up by calling on Pete who advanced the ball three yards through a fighting DeLand line, the team took new heart.

"It's up to you, Pete!" shouted Shrimp in the actor-player's ear, "If you can make a showing . . . !"

This was something the substitute linesman had never calculated doing. It was infinitely harder filling a star's shoes than playing a star's part. But, if being able to fill Vic's shoes meant . . . !

"Pete's playing as though inspired!" reported the radio announcer, "He's good for at least two yards every time he's called on. And Northrop's slowly pushing DeLand back . . . back toward her goal line!"

At the twenty-five yard mark DeLand, calling upon everything she had, finally checked a

fellow who had suddenly gone wild in Northrop's backfield.

"Maybe that bird's Vic after all!" kidded a fan, "With his hair dyed black!"

The battering exertion of Northrop's second great advance, had taken much from the team. And now, with DeLand breaking through the line almost at will, it was evident that Northrop's driving force was spent. Six yards were lost on two plays.

"She's all over now," admitted a rooter, glumly, "But DeLand knows she was in a battle anyway."

"Third down, sixteen to go!" called the referee.

"Look out for a pass!" warned Swede Hansen.

But Northrop elected to try a criss-cross behind the line with Number "23" carrying the ball. There was a magic something about this number. The wearer of it seemed to take on power. Whoever would have thought that Pete Elkins . . . ?

Running wide, and limping as he ran, the fellow who felt the weight of the entire North-

rop team on his shoulders, saw that he was going to be hemmed in and thrown for another loss. Still behind his line of scrimmage he stopped short, wheeled, and attempted to reverse his field. No use! The Northrop line had yielded like a sieve and DeLand tacklers were seeping through everywhere, arms outstretched. Straight in front of him—thirty odd yards away—loomed the DeLand goal posts! . . . Chances were his team—Northrop—would never be nearer. Acting on the impulse of the moment, Vic Latham's "double" faced the goal posts and dropped the pigskin to meet an up-swinging toe as frantic forms leaped in front.

"What a play!" shrieked the radio announcer. "Vic Latham's kicked an unexpected field goal! Pardon me, folks . . . did I say Vic? . . . I mean Pete Elkins! . . . It's all the same anyway! Quickest piece of thinking I ever saw! Puts Northrop back in the lead, too, nine to seven!"

"Whoopee!" shouted the real Vic, tossing his pillows in the air. "That beats 'em! They'll never be able to get through our bunch now!"

"Yea, Pete! Yea! Yea! Yea!" cheered

the Northrop stands, giving credit this time where credit was due.

Another din arose as it was seen that Coach Tudor was having Number "23" taken from the game. The famous old jersey had lived up to its name and now the figure wearing it was being half-carried off the field, arms about the shoulders of two team-mates, one leg dragging.

"The actor right up to the final curtain!" laughed somebody, "Kept playing Vic even after he was found out!"

But in the locker room, stretched out on the rubbing table, trainer Eddie whistled as he took a look at the knee.

"Why, man, you were really hurt!" he exclaimed, as team-mates crowded in, the furiously contested game now a matter of past history and Northrop, the new champion.

"Yeah," grinned Pete, glancing down at the swollen knee cap, "I twisted it when they tackled me on running back that first kick-off. Wasn't that tough? And just when I wanted to show you how well I could act the part!"

"Act it!" repeated Shrimp, reverently, "You *lived* it!"

"And how you ever kicked a field goal with your knee in that condition!" marveled Coach Tudor.

Pete lay for a moment, blinking thoughtfully. "I've been trying to figure that out myself," he admitted, "It all seems like a dream to me." Then his face brightened as a possible explanation occurred, "I guess that was the only time I was really in character!"

The following week, at the big football banquet, two Northrop stars stood side by side, each on crutches, accepting their letters together, and, by the cheers which went up for both, none could tell them apart.

THE END



